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DISCOURSES  
ON  
SEVERAL SUBJECTS  
AND  
OCCASIONS.

BY  
THE RIGHT REVEREND  
GEORGE HORNE, D. D.  
LATE LORD BISHOP OF NORWICH.

A NEW EDITION.

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HAVING been prevented, for a time, by the discharge of a laborious but highly honourable office, from performing the more immediate duties of my profession, I was yet desirous that I might not seem to lose the clergyman in the magistrate, of still continuing to do something toward promoting the great end and purpose of life. And though the frequent returns of business gave little hopes of composing fresh discourses, its intervals, I thought, might suffice to digest and publish some, which had been already composed.

This form of publication is generally supposed less advantageous, at present, than any other. But it may be questioned, whether the supposition does justice to the age, when we consider only the respect which has so recently been paid to the sermons of the learned and elegant Dr. Blair. And greater respect cannot be paid them, than they deserve.

The multitude of old sermons affords no argument against the publication of new ones; since new ones will be read, when old ones are neglected; and almost all mankind are, in this respect, Athenians.

Besides, there is a *taste* in moral and religious, as well as in other compositions, which varies in different ages, and may very lawfully and innocently be indulged. Thousands received instruction and consolation formerly from sermons, which would not now be endured. The preachers of them served their generation, and are blessed for evermore. But, because provision was made for the wants of the last century in one way, there is no reason why it should not be made for the wants of this in another. The next will behold a set of writers of a fashion suited to it, when our dis-

courses shall, in their turn, be antiquated and forgotten among men; though, if any good be wrought by them in this their day, our hope is, with that of faithful Nehemiah, that our God will remember us concerning them!

But as the productions of every author, who adds to the number, are expected to contain something new, either in matter, or manner, it will naturally be asked, what are my pretensions? I will beg leave to deliver my sentiments on the subject in the words of the excellent and amiable Fenelon, extracted from the last of his most admirable "Dialogues on the Eloquence of the Pulpit."

"I would have a preacher explain the whole plan of religion, and unfold every part of it in the most intelligible manner, by showing the origin and establishment, the tradition and connexion, of its principles, its sacraments, and institutions.

"For every thing in scripture is connected; and this connexion is, perhaps, the most extraordinary and wonderful thing to be seen in the sacred writings.

"An audience of persons, who had heard the chief points of the Mosaic history and law well explained, would be able to receive far more benefit from an explication of the truths of the gospel, than the generality of Christians are now.

"Preachers speak every day to the people of the Scriptures, the Church, the Patriarchs, the Law, the Gospel; of Sacrifice, of Moses, and Aaron, and Melchisedek; of Christ, the Prophets, and Apostles; but there is not sufficient care taken to instruct men in the meaning of these things, and the characters of these holy persons.

"This way of having recourse to the first foundations of religion, would be so far from seeming low, that it would give most discourses that force and beauty which they generally want; since the hearers can never be instructed or persuaded in the mysteries of religion, if you do not trace things back to their source.



“ For example—How can you make them understand what the Church says, after St. Paul, that Jesus Christ is our **PASSOVER**, if you do not explain to them the Jewish Passover, which was appointed to be a perpetual memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, and to typify a more important redemption that was reserved for Messiah?

“ Almost every thing in religion is historical. The best way of proving its truth, is to represent it justly; for then it carries its own evidence along with it. A coherent view of the chief facts relative to any person or transaction, should be given in a concise, lively, close, pathetic manner, accompanied with such moral reflections as arise from the several circumstances, and may best instruct the hearers.

“ A preacher ought to affect people by strong images; but it is from the scripture that he should learn to make powerful impressions. There he may clearly discover the way to render sermons plain and popular, without losing the force and dignity they ought always to possess.

“ If the clergy applied themselves to this mode of teaching, we should then have two different sorts of preachers. They who are not endowed with a great share of vivacity, would explain the scripture clearly, without imitating its lively and animated manner; and if they expounded the word of God judiciously, and supported their doctrine by an exemplary life, they would be very good preachers. They would employ what St. Ambrose requires, a chaste, simple, clear style, full of weight and gravity, without affecting elegance, or despising the smoothness and graces of language. The other sort, being of a poetical turn of mind, would explain the holy book in its own style and figures; and by that means become accomplished preachers. The former would instruct their hearers with solidity and perspicuity; the latter would add to this instruction, the sublimity, the vehemence, and divine enthusiasm of the scripture, which would be (if I may so say) entire and living in them, as much as it can be in men, who are not miraculously inspired from above.”

the duties resulting from that state, and what the powers whereby he was enabled to perform them. We must learn, whether he be now in the same state, or whether an alteration in his state may not have subjected him to new wants, and new obligations. Upon a knowledge of these particulars, every system of religion and morality must be constructed, which is designed for the use of men. A system, in which the consideration of these hath no place, is like a course of diet prescribed by a physician, unacquainted with his patient's constitution, and with the nature of the disease under which he has the misfortune to labour.

It is obvious to remark, that this knowledge of human nature, of what it was at the beginning, and what alterations have since happened in it, is a knowledge to the attainment of which no strength of genius, no depth of reasoning, no subtlety of metaphysical disquisition, can ever lead us. It is a matter of fact, and must be ascertained, as matters of fact are, by evidence and testimony. But he only, who made man, can inform us, how man was made; with what endowments, and for what purposes. If he hath not done it, the world is, of necessity, left in utter ignorance of so capital a point. And this reflection alone may supply the place of a thousand arguments, to convince us that he hath done it.

We find an opinion current through heathen antiquity, that all is not right with the human race; that things were not at first as they are now, but that a change hath been introduced for the worse. When the philosophers tell us, that mankind were sent upon earth to do penance for crimes by them committed in a pre-existent state, what is it, but saying, that man once was upright and happy; but that, ceasing to be upright, he ceased to be happy; and that natural evil is the consequence and punishment of moral. Nor is it at all difficult to discern, through the fictions of the poets, those truths which gave birth to them, while we read of a golden age, when righteousness and peace kissed each other; of a man framed of clay, and animated by a spark of celestial fire; of a woman endowed with every gift and grace from above; and of the fatal casket, out of which, when opened by her, a flight of calamities overspread the earth; but not without a reserve of HOPE, that, at some future period of refreshment and restitution, they should be

done away. Such are the shadowy scenes, which, by the faint glimmering of tradition, reflected from an original revelation, present themselves in that night of the world, the era of pagan fable and delusion, when the imaginations of poetry and the conjectures of philosophy were equally unable to supply the information which had been long lost, concerning the origin of the world, of man, and of evil.

With this information we are furnished by the writings of Moses, penned under the direction of him who giveth to man the spirit of understanding, for the instruction of ages and generations. We are told, by whom the matter, of which our system is composed, was brought into being; and in what manner the several objects around us were gradually and successively formed, till the whole, completely finished, and surveyed by its great Author, was pronounced *good*, or fit, in every respect, to answer the end for which it was designed.

After this are related the particulars concerning the formation of man; the time of his production; the resolution taken upon the occasion; the materials of which he was composed; the divine image in which God created him; and the dominion over the creatures with which he was invested. It is intended, in the following discourse, to offer such considerations, as may be of use toward the explanation and illustration of these particulars, in their order.

With regard to the *time* of man's formation, we may observe of the divine procedure, what is true of every human plan, concerted with wisdom and foresight; that which was first in intention, was last in execution. Man, for whom all things were made, was himself made last of all. We are taught to follow the heavenly artist, step by step, first in the production of the inanimate elements, next of vegetable, and then of animal life, till we come to the masterpiece of the creation, man endued with reason and intellect. The house being built, its inhabitant appeared; the feast being set forth, the guest was introduced; the theatre being decorated and illuminated, the spectator was admitted, to behold the splendid and magnificent scenery in the heavens above, and the earth beneath; to view the bodies around him moving in perfect order and harmony, and every creature performing the part allotted it in the universal drama;

that, seeing, he might understand, and, understanding, adore its supreme Author and Director.

Not that, even in the original and perfect state of his intellectual powers, he was left to demonstrate the being of a God, either *à priori*, or *à posteriori*. His Creator, we find, immediately manifested himself to him, and conversed with him, informing him, without all doubt, of what had passed previous to his own existence, which otherwise he never could have known; instructing him, how, and for what purpose the world and man were made, and to whom he was bound to ascribe all praise and glory, on that account. The loss of this instruction occasioned some of his descendants, in after ages, to worship the creature, instead of the Creator. Ignorant of him who gave the sun for a light by day, they fell prostrate before that bright image of its Maker's glory, which to the eye of sense appeared to be the God that governed the world.

The other parts of this system were produced by the word of the Creator. "He spake, and it was done." The elements were his servants: "he said to one, Go, and it went; to another, Come, and it came; to a third, Do this," and the commission was instantly executed. But to the formation of man (with reverential awe, and after the manner of men be it spoken) he seems more immediately to have addressed his power and wisdom. "Let us make man;" all things are now ready; let the work of creation be completed and crowned by the production of its possessor and lord, who is to use, to enjoy, and to rule over it; "Let us make man."

The phraseology, in which this *resolution* is couched, is remarkable; "Let *us* make man;" but the Old Testament furnishes more instances of a similar kind; "Behold, man is become *like one of us*; let *us* go down, and confound their language; whom shall *we* send, and who will go for *us*?" These plural forms, thus used by the Deity, demand our attention.

Three solutions of the question have been offered.

The first is that given by the Jews, who tell us, that, in these forms, God speaks of himself and his angels. But may we not ask, upon this occasion—"Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" With which of the angels did he at any time vouchsafe to



share his works and his attributes? Could they have been his coadjutors in the work of creation, which he so often claims to himself, declaring, he will not give the glory of it to another? Do we believe—do the Jews believe—did any body ever believe, that man was made by angels, or made in the image and likeness of angels? Upon this opinion, therefore, we need not spend any more time. We know from whence it came, and for what end it was devised and propagated.

A second account of the matter is, that the King of heaven adopts the style employed by the kings of the earth, who frequently speak of themselves in the plural number, to express dignity and majesty. But doth it seem at all reasonable to imagine, that God should borrow his way of speaking from a king, before man was created upon the earth? The contrary supposition would surely carry the air of more probability with it, namely, that because the Deity originally used this mode of expression, therefore kings, considering themselves as his delegates and representatives, afterward did the same. But however this might be, the interpretation, if admitted, will not suffice to clear the point. For, as it has been judiciously observed, though a king and governor may say *us* and *we*, there is certainly no figure of speech, that will allow any single person to say, “One of us,” when he speaks only of himself. It is a phrase that can have no meaning, unless there be more persons than one concerned.

What then should hinder us from accepting the third solution, given by the best expositors, ancient and modern, and drawn from this consideration, that in the unity of the divine essence there is a plurality of persons, coequal and coeternal, who might say, with truth and propriety, “Let us make man;” and, “Man is become like one of us!” Of such a personality revelation informs us; it is that upon which the economy of man’s redemption is founded; his creation, as well as that of the world, is, in different passages, attributed to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; what more natural, therefore, than that, at his production, this form of speech should be used by the divine persons? What more rational than to suppose, that a doctrine, so important to the human race, was communicated from the beginning, that men might know whom they worshipped, and



how they ought to worship? What other good and sufficient reason can be given, why the name of God, in use among believers from the first, should likewise be in the *plural* number, connected with verbs and pronouns in the *singular*?\* It is true, we Christians, with the New Testament in our hands, may not want these arguments to prove the doctrine: but why should we overlook, or slight such very valuable evidence of its having been revealed and received in the church of God, from the foundation of the world? It is a satisfaction, it is a comfort to reflect, that, in this momentous article of our faith, we have patriarchs and prophets for our fathers; that they lived, and that they died in the belief of it; that the God † of Adam, of Noah, and of Abraham, is likewise our God; and that when we adore him in three persons, and give glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, we do as it was done in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Proceed we to consider the *materials*, of which man was composed.

“The word of the Lord once came to the prophet Jeremiah, ‡ saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then he went down to the potter’s house, and behold he wrought a work on the wheel. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Behold as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand.”

A scene like this is presented to our imaginations by the words of Moses; “The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground;” he moulded § or modelled him as a potter doth; we see the work, as it were, upon the wheel, rising and growing under the hands of the divine Artificer!

The human body was not made of the celestial elements, light and air, but of the more gross terrestrial matter, as being designed to receive and communicate notices of terrestrial objects, by organs of a nature similar to them. In this instance, as in another since, God seemeth to have “chosen the base things of the world, to confound things honourable and mighty,” ¶ when of the dust of the ground he composed a frame, superior, in rank and dignity, to the heavens and all their hosts. They whose profession leads them to ex-

\* ברא אלהים Gen. i. 1. † אלהים. ‡ Jer. xviii. 1.

§ יצר.

¶ 1 Cor. i. 28.

amine the structure of this astonishing piece of mechanism, these men see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the formation of the human body. A contemplation of its parts, and their disposition, brought Galen upon his knees, in adoration of the wisdom with which the whole is contrived; and incited him to challenge any one, upon an hundred years' study, to tell, how any the least fibre or particle could have been more commodiously placed, either for use, or beauty. While the world shall last, genius and diligence will be producing fresh proofs, that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made;" that "marvellous are the works," and, above all, this capital work of the Almighty; and that the hand which made it, must needs be verily and indeed divine.

Into the body of man, thus constructed, we learn from Moses, that God "breathed the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The question here will be, Whether these words are intended to denote the rational and immortal soul, or the sensitive and animal life?

They are certainly sometimes used in the lower of these acceptations. "Cease ye from man, whose breath \* is in his nostrils. All creatures, in whose nostrils was the breath of life, † died by the flood." By these texts it appears, that the terms *spirit* and *breath* ‡ are used to signify that animal life, which is supported mechanically, by respiration through the nostrils.

But they are likewise used for the rational and immortal soul; witness those words of the Psalmist, adopted by our Lord, when expiring on the cross; "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." § So again—"The spirit || shall return to God who gave it." And—"The spirit of man ¶ is the candle of the Lord."

Spiritual essences and operations come not under the cognizance of those senses, which, during the present state of probation, God has been pleased to make the inlets of our ideas. They must therefore be represented and described to us, in the way of comparison and analogy, by such language as is commonly styled *figurative*, or *metaphorical*. Of animal life, begun and continued by respiration, we have a proper and sufficient knowledge. From a contemplation of that life, and the manner in which it is supported by the air, we

\* נשמה. † נשמת רוח חיים. ‡ נשמת and רוח.  
§ רוחי. || הרוח. ¶ נשמת אדם.

are directed to frame our notions of an higher life, maintained by the influence of an higher principle. For this purpose, the terms which denote the former, are borrowed to express the latter; and we find the words, translated *spirit* and *breath*, sometimes used for one, and sometimes for the other.

But when we consider, that man, as other scriptures do testify, has within him a rational soul, an immortal spirit, which on the dissolution of the body, returns to God who gave it; that, in this original description of his formation, we may reasonably expect to find both parts of his composition mentioned; and that a personal act of the Deity, that of inspiring the breath of life, is recorded with regard to him, which is not said of the other creatures; we can hardly do otherwise than conclude, that the words were intended to denote not the animal life only, but also another life communicated with it, and represented by it; in a word, that man consisteth of a body so organized, as to be sustained in life by the action of the material elements upon it, and a rational immortal soul, supported, in a similar manner, by the influence of a superior and spiritual agency.

We had occasion to observe above, that when the knowledge of the Creator, furnished at the beginning by revelation, had been lost in the heathen world, men paid to the works of his hands that adoration which was due to him. The material elements were invested with divinity and immortality, and worshipped as gods. It may now be farther observed, that to the soul of man, considered as a portion of these elements, was attributed the same divinity and immortality; and thus things natural were substituted in the place of things spiritual, a proper notion of which could not then be attained, for want of that instruction from above, which directs us how to transfer our ideas from one to the other, and to believe in the latter, as conceived through the medium of the former. So difficult has it ever been found, for the human mind, to pass the bounds of matter, and to explore the invisible wonders of the spiritual world. And whoever observes the progress of that scheme, which is once more set up against Revelation by some, in our own and a neighbouring nation, who affect the title of *Philosophers*, in opposition to that of *Christians*, and whose abilities one cannot but lament to see employed in this manner, will perceive its

tendency to introduce *materialism*, and to carry us back again to that state of darkness, from which it pleased the Father of lights, in mercy, to deliver us, by the Gospel of his Son.

But to return to the Mosaic account of man, of whose distinguishing excellencies we are taught to entertain the most exalted sentiments, when we are told, that he was made "in the *image* and likeness of God." For what more can be said of a creature, than that he is made after the similitude of his Creator?

As "God is a spirit," the similitude here spoken of must be a spiritual similitude, and the subject to which it relates must be the spiritual part of man, his rational and immortal soul.

To discover wherein such image and likeness consisted, what better method can we take, than to inquire, wherein consist that divine image and likeness, which, as the scriptures of the New Testament inform us, were restored in human nature, through the redemption and grace of Christ, who was manifested for that purpose! The image restored was the image lost; and the image lost was that in which Adam was created.

The expressions employed by the penmen of the New Testament plainly point out to us this method of proceeding. We read of the new man, "which after God is *created*;"\* and of man being "renewed after the image of him that *created* him;"† and the like. The use of the term *created* naturally refers us to man's first creation, and leads us to parallel that with his renovation, or new creation, by which he reobtained those excellencies possessed at the beginning, but afterward unhappily forfeited.

And what were these? "Renewed in *knowledge*, after the image of him that created him. Put on the new man, which after God is created in *righteousness* and *true holiness*, *οσιωτητι της αληθειας*, the *holiness* of, or according to *truth*." The divine image, then, is to be found in the understanding, and the will; in the understanding which knows the truth, and in the will which loves it. For when the understanding judges that to be true which with God is true, the man is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him;" when the will loves the truth, and all its

\* Eph. iv. 24.

† Col. iii. 10.



affections move in the pursuit and practice of it, the man is “new created after God in righteousness and holiness.” This divine image is restored in human nature, by the word of Christ enlightening the understanding, and the grace of Christ rectifying the will. These are, in the end, to render man what he was at first created, according to that passage in the writings of king Solomon, which is the shortest and best comment upon the words of Moses—“God made man upright”—the original word\* signifies *straight, direct*; there was no error in his understanding, no obliquity in his will. He who says this, says every thing. It is a full and comprehensive account of man in his original state; nothing can be added to it, or taken from it.

Such, then, was Adam, in the day when God crowned him king in Eden, and invested him with sovereignty over the works of his hands, giving him “*dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

It appears to have been the order of Providence, that while the flesh continued in subjection to the spirit, and man to God, so long the creatures should continue in subjection to man, as servants are subject to their lord and master. This original subjection we must suppose to have been universal and absolute. From the creatures man had much to learn, but nothing to fear. If, to answer the purposes of creation, or to convey to his mind ideas of his invisible enemies, any were at that time wild and noxious, with regard to him they were tame and harmless. In perfect security he saw, he considered, he admired. But when he rebelled against his God, the creatures renounced their allegiance to him, and became, in the hands of their common Creator, instruments of his punishment. “The beasts of the field” were no longer “at peace with him.” Yet in consequence of the new covenant and promise to redeem man and the world, we find it said after the flood—“The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea.”† So far is the superiority of the human species still preserved, that “every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents,

\* ישר

† Gen. ix. 2.



and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind."\* In some cases, for the sake of eminently holy persons, favoured by heaven on that account, the instincts of the most savage and ravenous have been suspended; as when some of every kind assembled and lodged together in the ark, and when the mouths of the lions were stopped in the den of Babylon, while the righteous and greatly beloved Daniel was there. The Redeemer of the world endued his disciples with the original privilege—"Behold I give you power to tread on serpents, and on scorpions; and nothing shall by any means hurt you."† And, agreeably to such promise, St. Paul "shook off the viper into the fire, and felt no harm."‡ The eighth psalm is a beautiful representation of the extent of this privilege, as it was possessed, at the beginning, by the first Adam, and as it hath been since restored to the second—"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

Let us indulge a few reflections on the foregoing particulars.

The imagination naturally endeavours to form some idea of the sensations that must have arisen in the mind of the first man, when, awakening into existence, with all his senses and faculties perfect, he beheld the glory and beauty of the new created world. Faded as we must suppose its glory and its beauty now to be, enough still remains to excite continual wonder, praise, and adoration. Yet is it represented in the scriptures of truth, as lying under a

\* James iii. 7.

† Luke x. 19.

‡ Acts xxviii. 5.

curse, as groaning and travailling in pain, and as little better than a prison, from which all, who are truly sensible of its condition, and their own, wish and pray to be delivered, into the liberty of the children of God. But if such be our prison, what notions are we led to form of those mansions, which our Lord is gone before to prepare for us, in his Father's house? Creation was finished in six days; and we read, that, "on the seventh, God rested from all his work which he created and made."\* But the transgression of man would not suffer him to rest. "My Father," says the blessed Jesus, "worketh hitherto, and I work."† Sin made its way into the first creation, and is gradually destroying it as a moth fretteth a garment.—"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner."‡ "But we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."§ We read of one, who, in vision, "saw a new heaven, and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."|| When the new creation shall be finished and prepared, an act of omnipotence will be exerted, similar to that which passed at the formation of Adam. The Lord God will again "form man out of the dust of the ground, and breathe into his nostrils the breath of life." From his long sleep in the chamber of the grave, he will awake to behold the never fading glories of a world, which "will have no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the Lord God and the Lamb," those brighter and inextinguishable luminaries, shall enlighten it for ever.¶ The Almighty shall again with complacency survey the works of his hands, and pronounce every thing he has made to be "very good;" he shall again rest on the seventh day; the children of the resurrection shall enter into his rest, and keep an eternal sabbath. Let us "comfort one another with these words."

A view of the different materials of which man is composed, may teach us to form a proper estimate of him. He stands between the two worlds, the natural and the spiritual, and partakes of both. His body is material, but

\* Gen. ii. 2.      † John v. 17.      ‡ Isa. li. 6.      § 2 Pet. iii. 13.  
 || Rev. xxi. 1.      ¶ Rev. xxi. 23.

its inhabitant descends from another system. His soul, like the world from which it comes, is immortal; but his body, like the world to which it belongs, is frail and perishable. From its birth it contains in it the seeds and principles of dissolution, toward which it tends every day and hour, by the very means that nourish and maintain it, and which no art can protract beyond a certain term. In spite of precaution and medicine, "the evil days will come, and the years draw nigh, when he shall say, I have no pleasure in them." Pains and sorrows will succeed each other, as "the clouds return after the rain," blackening the face of heaven, and darkening the sources of light and joy. The hands, those once active and vigorous "keepers of the house," grown paralytic, shall "tremble;" and "the strong men," those firm and able columns which supported it, shall "bow themselves," and sink under the weight. The external "grinders" of the food, the teeth, "shall cease, because they are few," and the work of mastication shall be imperfectly performed. Dim suffusion shall veil the organs of sight, "they that look out of the windows shall be darkened." "The doors," or valves, "shall be shut in the streets," or alleys of the body, when the digestive powers are weakened, and "the sound of the" internal "grinding is low." Sleep, if it light upon the eyelids of age, will quickly remove again, and "he will rise up" at the time when the first "voice of the bird" proclaims the approach of the morning. "All the daughters of music shall be brought low;" he will hear no more the voice of singing men, and singing women. Timidity and distrust will predominate, and he will be alarmed at every thing; "he shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way." As the early "almond tree," when it flourishes in full blossom, his hoary head shall be conspicuous in the congregation, the sure prognostic, not of spring, alas, but of winter; he who, like "the grasshopper," in the season of youth, was so sprightly in his motions, now scarce able to crawl upon the earth, "shall be a burden" to himself, and the organs of sense being vitiated and impaired, "desire" and appetite "shall fail." The spinal marrow, that "silver cord," with the infinite ramifications of the nerves, thence derived, will be relaxed, and lose its tone; "and the golden bowl," the receptacle of the brain, from which it proceeds, "shall be

broken." The vessel, by which, as a "pitcher," the blood is carried back to the heart for a fresh supply, "shall be broken at the fountain, and the wheel," or instrument of circulation, which throws it forth again to the extremities of the body, "shall be broken at the cistern."\* When this highly finished piece of mechanism shall be thus disjoined and dissolved, "then shall the dust," of which it was framed, "return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." Learn we from hence, to bestow on each part of our composition that proportion of time and attention, which, upon a due consideration of its nature and importance, it shall appear to claim at our hands.

To stamp on man his own image, was the design of God in creating him; to restore that image, when lost, was the design of God in redeeming him. Could greater honour have been done to human nature? Never may the guilt be ours of debasing our nature, and obliterating "this image and superscription;" a species surely of treason against the majesty of heaven. Sloth will obscure the fair impression; its attendants, ignorance and vice, will destroy it. Let diligence therefore be appointed to watch over it, and to retouch, from time to time, the lines that are faded; till, the whole standing confessed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, men may glorify our Father which is in heaven, while they behold his resemblance upon earth. So shall we answer the ends of our creation and redemption, and serve our generation in the most effectual manner. And though, when this is done, we must close our eyes in death, and sleep with our fathers; yet the hour cometh, in which we shall open them again, to "behold thy face, O God, in righteousness; we shall be satisfied, when we awake, with thy likeness."†

Was Adam invested with sovereignty over the creatures? Observe we from hence that man was made to rule. Majestic in his form, he was ordained to trample upon earth, and aspire to heaven, which, without putting a force upon nature, he cannot but behold, and regard. In the original

\* See the Portrait of Old Age, in a Paraphrase on the six former verses of the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes, by John Smith, M.D. of the College of Physicians; reprinted in 1752, for E. Withers, at the Seven Stars, between the two Temple Gates, Fleet Street.

† Ps. xvii. 15.



subjection of the creatures we see what ought to be that of every desire and appetite, terrestrial and animal, to the ruling principle within us. The subtlety of some creatures, and the fierceness of others, now exhibit to us the difficulty of subduing and governing the passions, broken loose, like them, from the dominion of their master; inasmuch that the apostle, who asserts, that every creature may be, and has been tamed of man, yet says of one part of man, the tongue, "it is a deadly evil, which no man can tame," meaning, by his own powers. Through the redemption and grace which are by Christ Jesus, this dominion, as well as the other, is restored, not only over our own passions, but over still more formidable opponents, the evil spirits in arms against us. For thus our Lord gave his disciples power, not only over the natural "serpents and scorpions," but over some, whose venom is of a more malignant and fatal kind; "over all the power of THE ENEMY." The apostles returned, accordingly, crying out, "Lord, the very DEVILS are subject unto us, through thy name!" And we have a general promise, that, in our combats with them, God will give us victory, and bruise their leader, Satan himself, under our feet. Our Redeemer is exalted above the heavens, and human nature, in the second Adam, restored to dominion over all the earth. And though, at present, the apostle's lot may be ours, to "fight with beasts," with evil men, evil passions, and evil spirits, yet, through God, we shall do great acts; it is he that shall tread down those that rise up against us; till, finally triumphant over the last enemy, and exalted to the eternal throne, we shall view the earth beneath us, and the sun and stars shall be dust under our feet.



## DISCOURSE II.

## THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

*And the Lord God planted a Garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the Man whom he had formed.—Gen. ii. 8.*

IN a preceding Discourse some considerations were offered, tending to elucidate the particulars related by Moses concerning the origination of man; namely, the time of his formation; the resolution taken by the Deity on the occasion; the materials of which he was composed; the divine image in which he was created; and the dominion over the creatures with which he was invested.

The words now read mark out the history of that habitation in which it pleased the Almighty to place him at the beginning, for the subject of our present inquiries. A subject, not only curious, but highly interesting. For if Levi be said to have paid tithes to Melchisedek, as being in the loins of Abraham, at the time of that transaction; we may, in like manner, regard ourselves, as having taken possession of Eden; being in the loins of our ancestor, when he did so. And though it can afford but small comfort, to reflect upon the excellence of an inheritance which we have lost, it may inspire into us due sentiments of gratitude and love toward that blessed person, who hath recovered it for us. And thus every consideration which enhances the value of the possession, will proportionably magnify the goodness of our great Benefactor.

For these reasons, we sometimes, perhaps, find ourselves disposed to lament the conciseness and obscurity of that account which Moses hath left us of man's primeval estate in Paradise. But when we recollect, that to this account we owe all the information we have, upon so important a point, it will become us to be thankful that we have been told so much, rather than to murmur because we have been told no more; and instead of lamenting

the obscurity of the Mosaic account, to try whether, by diligence and attention, that obscurity may not be, in part, dispelled. For though Moses hath only given us a compendious relation of facts (and facts of the utmost importance may be related in very few words), that relation is ratified and confirmed in the scriptures of both Testaments, in which are found many references and allusions to it. By bringing these forth to view, and comparing them together, we may possibly be led to some agreeable speculations concerning the situation of Adam in the garden of Eden, the nature of his employment, and the felicity he there experienced.

On a subject so remote, and confessedly difficult, demonstration will not be expected. Much of what is advanced, must be advanced rather as probable, than certain; and where there is little positive information, the candour so often experienced will accept of such notices as can be obtained by inference and deduction.

When we think of Paradise, we think of it as the seat of delight. The name EDEN authorizes us so to do. It signifies PLEASURE; and the idea of pleasure is inseparable from that of a garden, where man still seeks after lost happiness, and where, perhaps, a good man finds the nearest resemblance of it, which this world affords. "What is requisite," exclaims a great and original genius, "to make a wise and a happy man, but reflection and peace? And both are the natural growth of a garden. A garden to the virtuous is a Paradise still extant; a Paradise unlost."\* The culture of a garden, as it was the first employment of man, so it is that to which the most eminent persons in different ages have retired, from the camp and the cabinet, to pass the interval between a life of action, and a removal hence. When old Dioclesian was invited from his retreat, to resume the purple which he had laid down some years before,—“Ah,” said he, “could you but see those fruits and herbs of mine own raising at Salona, you would never talk to me of empire!” An accomplished statesman of our own country, who spent the latter part of his life in this manner, hath so well described the advantages of it, that it would be injustice to communicate his ideas in any words but his own. “No other sort of abode,” says he, “seems to contribute so

\* Centaur not fabulous. p. 61.—*Dr. Young.*

much, both to the tranquillity of mind, and indolence of body. The sweetness of the air, the pleasantness of the smell, the verdure of the plants, the cleanness and lightness of food, the exercise of working or walking; but, above all, the exemption from care and solicitude, seem equally to favour and improve both contemplation and health, the enjoyment of sense and imagination, and thereby the quiet and ease both of body and mind. A garden has been the inclination of kings, and the choice of philosophers; the common favourite of public and private men; the pleasure of the greatest, and the care of the meanest; an employment and a possession, for which no man is too high, nor too low. If we believe the scriptures," concludes he, "we must allow, that God Almighty esteemed the life of man in a garden the happiest he could give him, or else he would not have placed Adam in that of Eden."\*

The garden of Eden had, doubtless, all the perfection it could receive from the hands of Him, who ordained it to be the mansion of his favourite creature. We may reasonably presume it to have been the earth in miniature, and to have contained specimens of all natural productions, as they appeared, without blemish, in an unfallen world; and these disposed in admirable order, for the purposes intended. And it may be observed, that when, in after times, the penmen of the scriptures have occasion to describe any remarkable degree of fertility and beauty, of grandeur and magnificence, they refer us to the garden of Eden. "He beheld all the plain well watered as the garden of the Lord.† The land was as the garden of Eden before them, but behind them a desolate wilderness."‡ The prophet Ezekiel, at the command of God, for an admonition to Pharaoh, thus portrays the pride of the Assyrian empire, under the splendid and majestic imagery afforded by vegetation in its most flourishing state. "The Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, fair of branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers to all the trees in the field. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs

\* Gardens of Epicurus.—*Sir William Temple.*

† Gen. xiii. 10.

‡ Joel ii. 3.

were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters when he shot forth. Thus was he fair in his greatness, and in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him, nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches; so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.”\* After having related the fall of this towering and extensive empire, the prophet makes the application to the king of Egypt; “To whom art thou thus like, in glory and greatness, among the trees of Eden? Yet shalt thou be brought down, with the trees of Eden, to the lower parts of the earth.” In another place, we find the following ironical address to the king of Tyre, as having attempted to rival the true God, and the glories of his Paradise. “Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering—thou wast upon the holy mountain of God—thou wast perfect in thy ways, from the day that thou wast created, until iniquity was found in thee. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom, by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.”†

Traditions and traces of this original Garden seem to have gone forth into all the earth, though, as an elegant writer justly observes, “they must be expected to have grown fainter and fainter in every transfusion from one people to another. The Romans probably derived their notion of it, expressed in the gardens of Flora, from the Greeks, among whom this idea seems to have been shadowed out under the stories of the gardens of Alcinous. In Africa they had the gardens of the Hesperides, and in the east those of Adonis. The term of *Horti Adonides* was used by the ancients to signify *gardens of pleasure*, which answers strangely to the very name of Paradise, or the garden of *Eden*.”‡ In the writings of the poets, who have lavished all the powers of genius and the charms of verse upon the subject, these and the like counterfeit or secondary paradises, the copies of the true, will live and bloom, so long as the world itself shall endure.

\* Ezek. xxxi. 3, &c.

† Ezek. xxviii. 12, &c.

‡ Spence's *Polymetis*, cited in “*Letters on Mythology*,” p. 126.



It hath been already suggested, that a garden is calculated no less for the improvement of the mind, than for the exercise of the body; and we cannot doubt, but that peculiar care would be taken of that most important end, in the disposition of the garden of Eden.

From the situation and circumstances of Adam, it should not seem probable, that an all wise and all gracious Creator would leave him in that state of ignorance, in which, since the days of Faustus Socinus, it hath been but too much the fashion to represent him. For may we not argue in some such manner as the following?

If so fair a world was created for the use and satisfaction of his terrestrial part, formed out of the dust, can we imagine, that the better part, the immortal spirit from above, the inhabitant of the fleshly tabernacle prepared for it, should be left in a state of destitution and desolation, unprovided with wisdom, its food, its support, and its delight?

If men, since the fall, and labouring under all the disadvantages occasioned by it, have been enabled to make those attainments in knowledge, which they certainly have made; and we find the understanding of a Solomon replete with every species of wisdom, human and divine; can we conceive ignorance to have been the characteristic of the first formed father of the world, created with all his powers and faculties complete and perfect, and living under the immediate tuition of God?

If upon the trial of Adam, as the head and representative of mankind, their fate, as well as his own, both in time and eternity, was to depend, can we ever think, his Maker would expose him to such a trial, with a mind not better informed, than that of a child, or an idiot?

If redemption restored what was lost by the fall, and the second Adam was a counterpart of the first, must we not conceive Adam to have once been what man is, when restored by grace to "the image of God in wisdom and holiness?" And does not he, who degrades the character of the *Son of God*\* in Paradise, degrade in proportion the character of that other *Son of God*, and the redemption and restoration which are by him?

Our first father differed from all his descendants in this

\* "Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God."—Luke iii. 38.



particular, that he was not to attain the use of his understanding by a gradual process from infancy, but came into being in full stature and vigour, of mind as well as body. He found creation likewise in its prime. It was morning with man and the world.

We are not certain with regard to the time allowed him, to make his observations upon the different objects with which he found himself surrounded; but it should seem, either that sufficient time was allowed him for that end, or that he was enabled, in some extraordinary manner, to pervade their essences, and discover their properties. For we are informed, that God brought the creatures to him, that he might impose upon them suitable names; a work which, in the opinion of Plato,\* must be ascribed to God himself. The use and intent of names is to express the natures of the things named; and in the knowledge of those natures, at the beginning, God, who made them, must have been man's instructor. It is not likely, that, without such an instructor, men could ever have formed a language at all; since it is a task which requires much thought; and the great masters of reason seem to be agreed, that, without language, we cannot think to any purpose. However that may be, from the original imposition of names by our first parent, we cannot but infer, that his knowledge of things natural must have been very eminent and extensive; not inferior, we may suppose, to that of his descendant, king Solomon, who "spake of trees, from the cedar to the hyssop, and of beasts, and fowl, and creeping things, and fishes." It is therefore probable, that Plato asserted no more than the truth, when he asserted, according to the traditions he had gleaned up in Egypt and the east, that the first man was of all men *Φιλοσοφωτατος*, the greatest philosopher.

As man was made for the contemplation of God here, and for the enjoyment of him hereafter, we cannot imagine that his knowledge would terminate on earth, though it took its rise there. Like the patriarch's ladder, its foot was on earth, but its top, doubtless, reached to heaven. By it the mind ascended from the creatures to the Creator, and descended from the Creator to the creatures. It was the golden chain, which connected matter and spirit, preserving a communication between the two worlds.

\* *Τα πρῶτα ὀνόματα οἱ θεοὶ ἔθεσαν.*—In Cratylus.

That God had revealed and made himself known to Adam, appears from the circumstances related; namely, that he took him, and put him into the garden of Eden; that he conversed with him, and communicated a law, to be by him observed; that he caused the creatures to come before him, and brought Eve to him. In these transactions, God probably assumed some visible appearance; because, otherwise than by such assumed appearance, no man, while in the body, can see God. And we find, by what passed after the fatal transgression, that “the *voice*, or *sound*, of the Lord God walking in the garden,” was a voice, or sound, to which Adam had been accustomed, though guilt for the first time had made him afraid of it.

If there was, at the beginning, this familiar intercourse between Jehovah and Adam, and he vouchsafed to converse with him, as he afterward did with Moses, “as a man converseth with his friend,” there can be no reasonable doubt, but that he instructed him, as far as was necessary, in the knowledge of his Maker, of his own spiritual and immortal part, of the adversary he had to encounter, of the consequences to which disobedience would subject him, and of those invisible glories, a participation of which was to be the reward of his obedience.

When God, in aftertimes, selected a peculiar people, to be his church and heritage, to receive the law from his mouth, and to be the guardians of his promises, he “chose one place to place his name there;” to be the place of his residence, where he appeared, and was consulted. He gave directions for the construction of a temple, or house, in a particular manner appropriated to him, and called his; which, though composed of worldly elements, was so framed, as to exhibit an apt resemblance, model, or pattern of heavenly things; to serve, as a school for instruction, as a sanctuary for devotion. Might not the garden of Eden be a kind of temple, or sanctuary, to Adam; a place chosen for the residence and appearance of God; a place designed to represent and give him ideas of heavenly things; a place sacred to contemplation and devotion? Something of this sort seems to be intimated by the account we have of the garden in the second chapter of Genesis, and to be confirmed by the references and allusions to it, in other parts of the Scriptures.

With this view, we may observe, that though Paradise was created with the rest of the world, yet we are informed the hand of God was, in a more especial manner, employed in preparing this place for the habitation of man. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden. And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. And a river went out of Eden, to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads." Thus the Great Architect of the universe, he who, in the language of the apostle, "built all things," is described as selecting, disposing, and adorning this wonderful and happy spot, wherein was to be placed the creature made after his own image and likeness, but a little lower than the angels. Does not this circumstance suggest to us, that something more was intended, than what generally enters into our idea of a garden?

Whenever the garden of Eden is mentioned in the scriptures, it is called "the garden of God," or "the garden of the Lord;" expressions which denote some peculiar designation of it to sacred purposes, some appropriation to God and his service, as is confessedly the case with many similar phrases; such as "house of God, altar of God, man of God," and the like; all implying, that the persons and things spoken of were consecrated to him, and set apart for a religious use.

When it is said, "The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to DRESS it, and to KEEP it," the words undoubtedly direct us to conceive of it, as a place for the exercise of the body. We readily acquiesce in this as the truth, but not as the whole truth; it being difficult to imagine, that so noble a creature, the lord of the world, should have no other, or higher employment. Much more satisfaction will be found in supposing, that our first parents, while thus employed, like the priests under the law, while they ministered in the temple, were led to contemplations of a more exalted nature, "serving to the example and shadow of heavenly things." The powers of the body and the faculties of the mind might be set to work at the same time, by the same objects. And it is well known, that the words here used,\* do as frequently denote mental

\* שָׁמַר and עָבַד.

as corporeal operations ; and, under the ideas of DRESSING and KEEPING the sacred garden, may fairly imply the CULTIVATION and OBSERVATION of such religious truths, as were pointed out by the external signs and sacraments, which Paradise contained.

That some of the objects in Eden were of a sacramental nature, we can hardly doubt, when we read of “ the tree of knowledge,” and “ the tree of life.” The fruit of a material tree could not, by any virtue inherent in it, convey “ the knowledge of good and evil,” or cause that, by eating it, a man should “ live for ever.” But such fruit might be ordained as a sacrament, upon the participation of which, certain spiritual effects should follow. This is entirely conformable to reason, to the nature of man, and of religion.

It is remarkable, that, in the earliest ages, a custom should be found to prevail, both among the people of God, and idolaters, of setting apart and consecrating gardens and groves, for the purpose of religious worship. Thus Abraham, we are told, “ planted a tree, or grove, at Beer-sheba, and called on the name of the everlasting God.”\* The worshippers of false gods are described, in the writings of the prophets, as “ sacrificing in gardens,” as “ purifying themselves in gardens, behind one tree in the midst ;” and it is foretold, that they should be “ ashamed for the oaks which they had desired, and confounded for the gardens which they had chosen.”† A surprising uniformity in this point may be traced through all the different periods of idolatry, as subsisting among the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Groves were dedicated to the gods, and particular species of trees were sacred to particular deities. The same usage prevailed among the Druids, in these parts of the world. And, to this day, the aisles of our Gothic churches and cathedrals are evidently built in imitation of those arched groves, which of old supplied the place of temples. It is not, therefore, without reason, that the author of a learned dissertation on the subject makes the following remark—“ These were the hallowed fanes of the ancients, in which they performed divine worship. And indeed, if we would trace up this rite to its origin, we must have recourse to the true God himself, who instituted in Paradise a sacred garden, or grove ;

\* Gen. xxi. 33.

† Isa. lxxv. 3. lxxvi. 17.



ordained Adam to be the high priest of it, and consecrated in it two trees, for a public testimony of religion."

But upon the supposition now made, that the garden of Eden served as a kind of temple for our first parents, might we not expect to find some resemblance of it in the tabernacle and temple afterward erected, by the appointment of God, for his residence in the midst of his people Israel. The question is by no means absurd; especially if we recollect, that it was the design of the Mosaic sanctuary, with its apparatus, to prefigure the restoration of those spiritual blessings, which were forfeited and lost by the transgression in Paradise. Let us therefore inquire what satisfaction the scriptures will afford us upon this point.

The principal objects in the garden of Eden, with which revelation has brought us acquainted, are the plantations of trees, and the rivers of water, by which those plantations were nourished and supported in glory and beauty. Was there any thing of this sort in or about the tabernacle and temple?

With regard to the plantations, two passages in the Psalms incline us to think, there were such in the courts of the Jewish sanctuary, as well as in that of Eden; "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.\* The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."† These texts seem to suppose the real existence of such plantations, and, at the same time, to intimate the end and design of them; namely, to represent the progress and improvement of the faithful in virtue, through the influence of the divine favour. The same pleasing and expressive image is employed to the same purpose, in the first psalm—"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatever he doth shall prosper."

As to the rivers of water, which supplied and refreshed the garden of Eden and all its productions, we meet with something analogous to them, both in the tabernacle and temple.

During the journey of the children of Israel from Egypt

\* Ps. lii. 8.

† Ps. xcii. 12.



to Canaan, the camp in general and the sacred tabernacle in particular, were supplied with water in a miraculous manner, not only at the time when Moses smote the rock, but the same supply accompanied them afterward—"They drank of that rock," that is, the water of that rock, "which followed them." "He led thee (says Moses) through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who made water to flow for thee out of the rock of flint."\* And these waters, like those in Eden, were of a sacramental nature. "They did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ."† How lively a representation of that heavenly grace, which comforts our weary spirits, and enables us to accomplish our journey through the wilderness of life!

If from the tabernacle we proceed to the temple, we are there presented with the sacred streams of Siloah, breaking forth and flowing from the mount of God. In Ezekiel's famous vision of the new temple, there is a wonderful description, founded on the real situation of things at mount Sion, explaining their signification, and unavoidably carrying our thoughts back to the waters and plantations of the original sanctuary in Eden. "Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house, and behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward.—Then said he to me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live—And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side, and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade; neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaves thereof for medicine."‡

When the prophets have occasion to foretell the great and marvellous change to be effected in the moral world, under the evangelical dispensation, they frequently borrow their

\* Deut. viii. 15.

† 1 Cor. x. 4.

‡ Ezek. xlvii. 1. &amp;c.

ideas and expressions from the history of that garden, in which innocence and felicity once dwelt together, and which they represent as again springing up and blooming in the wilderness. Of the many passages which occur, two or three only shall be recited. "The Lord will comfort Sion, he will comfort all her waste places; he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody;"\* such joy and gladness, such thanksgiving and melody, at the restitution of all things, as were at their first creation, when "God saw every thing he had made, and behold, it was very good;" when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the holy One of Israel hath created it."† "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."‡

At the time appointed, these predictions received their accomplishment. Men "saw the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." By the death and resurrection of the Redeemer, lost Paradise was regained; and its inestimable blessings, wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, are now to be found and enjoyed in the Christian church. But as men are still men, and not angels, those blessings are still represented and conveyed by sacramental symbols, analogous to the original ones in Eden. From the sacred font flows the water of life, to purify, to refresh, to com-

\* Isa. li. 3.

† Isa. xli. 17.

Isa. xxxv. 1.

fort; “a river goes out of Eden, to water the garden,” and to “baptize all nations;” while the eucharist answers to the fruit of the tree of life: at the holy table, we may now “put forth our hands, and take, and eat, and live for ever.”

Let us go one step farther, and consider the state of things in the *heavenly* kingdom of our Lord. There, it is true, all figures and shadows, symbols and sacraments, shall be no more; because faith will there be lost in vision, and we shall “know even as we are known.” But in the mean time, till we attain that perfect consummation, was any person admitted to a sight of heaven, and the wonders that are therein, he could no otherwise describe them to us, who are yet in the body, than by the way of picture and similitude. This was the case of St. Paul. In a divine ecstasy, he had been caught up, and made to see and hear things, which he could not impart to others, on account of their incapacity to receive them. What then does he? He refers us to the habitation of our first parents, for a general and comparative idea of them. “I knew a man (says he) who was caught up into Paradise.” Our Lord, giving the penitent thief to understand, that his sorrows would soon be at an end, and he should pass, with his Saviour, into a place of rest and joy, uses the same expression—“This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” The beloved disciple, who was frequently in the spirit translated to those celestial mansions, which Christ is gone to prepare for us, gives a more particular and extended description of them. But how? By bringing to our view all Eden, its waters and plantations, together with those seen by Ezekiel, in his vision of the new temple. “He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.—And of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.—To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.—Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life—And the spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take the waters

of life freely." In these passages, the divine scenery is evidently borrowed from objects once really existing in the terrestrial Paradise, and employed to aid our conceptions in apprehending celestial glories. If, therefore, we are taught, that heaven resembles the garden of Eden, it seems fair and reasonable to conclude, that the garden of Eden resembled heaven, and was, from the beginning, intended so to do; that, like the temple under the law, and the church under the gospel, it was, to its happy possessors, a place chosen for the residence of God; a place designed to represent and furnish them with ideas of heavenly things; a place sacred to contemplation and devotion; in one word, that it was the primitive temple and church, formed and consecrated for the use of man, in his state of innocence. There, undisturbed by care, and, as yet, unassailed by temptation, all his faculties perfect, and his appetites in subjection, he walked with God, as a man walketh with his friend, and enjoyed communion with heaven, though his abode was upon earth. He studied the works of God, as they came fresh from the hands of the workmaster, and in the creation, as in a glass, he was taught to behold the glories of the Creator. Trained, in the school of Eden, by the material elements of a visible world, to the knowledge of one that is immaterial and invisible, he found himself excited, by the beauty of the picture, to aspire after the transcendent excellence of the divine original.— This sacred garden the first Adam by transgression lost; but all the blessings, signified and represented by it, have been, through the second Adam, restored to his posterity. In our stead, he subjected himself to the vengeance of "the flaming sword," and regained for us an entrance into Eden. For, "When he overcame the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." He is himself "the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God;" and, by the effusion of his Spirit, he gives us to drink "rivers of living water." In his church here below, he has all along communicated, and still communicates, his gifts, by external sacraments, which serve at once as signs, as means, and as pledges: but, admitted to the church above, we shall see, and taste them, as they are. "Thou," O Lord Jesu, "shalt show us," for thou only canst now show us "the path of LIFE," the "way to the tree of life,"



and introduce us to the truth and substance of all that was shadowed out by the blissful scenes of Eden ; for “ in thy presence is the fulness of JOY, and at thy right hand there are PLEASURES for evermore.”

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### DISCOURSE III.

#### THE TREE OF LIFE.

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*The Tree of Life also in the midst of the Garden.—Gen. ii. 9.*

SOME arguments were offered upon a former occasion, tending to prove, that the garden of Eden, laid out and planted by the hand of the Almighty, for the habitation of our first parents, in a state of innocence and felicity, was of a figurative and sacramental nature ; that, like the temple under the law, and the church under the gospel, it was, to its happy possessors, a place chosen for the residence of God ; a place designed to represent, and furnish them with ideas of heavenly things ; a place sacred to contemplation and devotion.

Among the objects presented to us, there is one, which, though then taken into the general account with the rest, may seem to claim a more particular attention. It stands conspicuous in the Mosaic description, the capital figure in that beautiful piece. It is said to have been placed in the centre of Eden, like the sun of the little system, and bears a name sufficiently calculated to awaken curiosity. The inspired historian, having informed us, that “ The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food ;” every thing, in the vegetable way, either useful, or ornamental ; adds—“ The tree of life also in the midst of the garden.”

Life, we know, as it relates to man, is twofold ; that of the body, and that of the soul ; animal and spiritual ; temporal and eternal. Each requires to be supported by a nutriment adapted to its nature, and supplied by something external to itself. The food of the body is, like the body,



material, and cometh out of the earth ; the food of the soul is, like the soul, spiritual, and cometh down from heaven. The tree of life was, doubtless, a material tree, producing material fruit, proper, as such, for the nourishment of the body. The question will be, whether it was intended to be eaten, in common, for that end alone ; or, whether it was not rather set apart, to be partaken of, at a certain time, or times, as a symbol, or sacrament of that celestial principle, which nourishes the soul unto immortality ? meaning, by that term, not a natural immortality, or bare existence, but that divine, spiritual, eternal life, which was lost by the fall, and the restitution of which is now “ the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

If it be supposed, that the tree of life was designed solely for the support of the body of man, there will appear no reason for its being distinguished, as it is by its appellation, from the other trees of the garden, which were all, in that sense, equally *trees of life*, being, as we are told, “ good for food.” And, indeed, the matter seems to be clearly determined otherwise, by the twenty-second verse of the third chapter, where we find fallen man excluded from Paradise, “ lest he should put forth his hand, and take also of the fruit of the tree of life, and eat, and live FOR EVER.”\* Immortality, therefore, was to have been obtained, according to God’s original appointment, by eating the fruit of the tree of life ; not, surely, as the Jews idly talk, by any medicinal quality, or virtue, preserving the eater from sickness and death, neither of which, by the way, was in the world, till introduced by sin. No : the thing speaks itself. A material tree could only confer eternal life as a divinely instituted symbol, or sacrament ; as “ an outward visible sign of an inward spiritual grace, given to Adam, as a means whereby he was to receive the same, and a pledge to assure him thereof.” Hereby he would be continually reminded of the truth, communicated to him, without all doubt, from the beginning ; that there was another and a better life than that led by him in the terrestrial and figurative Paradise ; a life, on which he was to set his affections, and to which he was to look, as the end, the reward, the crown of his obedience ; a life, supported, as it was given, by emanation from that Being, who only hath life

in himself, and is the fountain, from which, in various ways, it flows to all his creatures. Of Him, as the glorious sun of the intellectual world, and of his gracious gift, streaming, like light through the heavens, to enliven and bless the spiritual system, the tree of life, with its fruit, in the midst of Eden, is apprehended to have been ordained, as an instructive and comfortable symbol; that so a memorial of his abundant goodness might be shown upon earth, and new created man might sing of his righteousness.

The sacramental designation of the tree of life in Paradise may be farther evinced, perhaps, by a passage or two in the book of St. John's Revelation. "To him that overcometh," says the Captain of our salvation, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."\* And again—"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life."† By "eating of the tree of life in the Paradise of God," is here evidently meant a participation of eternal life with God in heaven. Of this eternal life the faithful followers of their great leader are to be put in possession, as the reward of their labours, when those labours shall have been accomplished; when they shall have walked to the end of their journey in the path of Christ's commandments, and shall have finally overcome their spiritual enemies. May we not therefore, by parity of reason, infer from hence the signification and intent of the tree of life in Eden? By means of that sacrament, had Adam gone happily through his probation, and persevered in obedience unto the end, he would have been admitted, in the kingdom of heaven, to that state of eternal life with God, for which he was always designed, and of which Paradise was the earthly resemblance. He would have been removed from the shadows of this world to the realities of a better. His removal must have differed, in the manner of it, from that of which we now live, or ought to live, in expectation. Without sin, death could have had no power over him. He would have been translated alive, as Enoch and Elijah, for particular purposes, afterward were. The change would have been wrought in him at once, as it was in them, and as it will be in those, who shall be found alive, at the coming of our Lord to judgment.

\* Rev. ii. 7.

† Rev. xxii. 14.

When transgression had subjected Adam to a sentence of condemnation, the case was altered. Glory and immortality could no longer be obtained upon the terms of the first covenant, now broken and void. The very attempt became criminal. Man was to be put under a new covenant, and in a new course of trial. He was to suffer in the flesh for sin, and to pay the penalty of death. But, through the merits of a surety, that death was to be made the gate of immortality. By faith he was to acquire, upon the mediatorial plan, a fresh right or power to eat of the tree of life, and live for ever, after the resurrection from the dead, with his propitiated and reconciled Maker. In mercy, therefore, he was excluded from the garden of Eden, and from the original symbol of that eternal life, which was now to be sought after by other means, and represented by other sacraments. He was sent forth into the world, to pass his time in toil, pain, and sorrow; in mourning, contrition, and penance; till death should set him free, and introduce him to the joys, purchased and prepared for him by that blessed person, "in whom is life, and the life is the light of men."\* The same divine person was always the source of immortality, however the sacred symbols, instituted to adumbrate it, have been varied under different dispensations. To our first parents, before the fall, he stood in the relation of Creator and Lord. To them, and to their posterity, since that sad catastrophe, he hath stood, and ever continueth to stand, in the new relation of Saviour and Redeemer. The man who doth not now acknowledge him in this latter character, will find him, in the former, an avenger to execute wrath: and what wrath can be so fierce and terrible as that of the Lamb? It is oil set on fire. The sinner, unless he be in love with condemnation, must not revert to the first covenant, and aim at the acquisition of eternal life, on the foot of the law of works, or the performance of unsinning obedience. In this case, the rebel claims promotion, instead of suing for pardon. He puts forth his hand to the fruit of the now forbidden tree, which is no longer food for man. Its nature is changed with our condition. To the eye of human pride it still looks fair and tempting; but its contents, when eaten, are

\* John i. 4.

ashes and sulphur; and immortality, without redemption, would prove the reverse of a blessing.

Such being the state of this matter, and the order of the divine economy concerning it, all that is said in the scriptures from the fall downward, with regard to the new method of obtaining eternal life, and the appointed means of so doing, will throw light backward, and serve to illustrate the account already given of the tree of life in Paradise.

To this end may be adduced the texts, which speak of the Redeemer, his religion, truth, grace, and salvation, under the very original expression of the tree of life.

And here, the first place is due to that charming description, left us by king Solomon, in the Proverbs, of divine WISDOM personified, and represented as having been with God in the beginning, yet rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and delighting to be with the sons of men; as the way, the light, and the life; the author and giver of peace and comfort, joy and gladness; the Creator of all things, by whom the worlds were made, and without whom was not any thing made, that was made.—“Happy”—says the great teacher of Israel—“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.”\*

Thus, in another place—“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”† The fruit produced by the righteous, through grace, copious, fair, and well flavoured, like that which once grew upon the tree of life, invites all beholders to come and partake, with its owner, of that glory and immortality with which it shall one day be crowned. And surely he, who, by these means, winneth souls to righteousness and salvation, is wise indeed! He resembles the eternal wisdom, the Son

\* Prov. iii. 13, &c.

† Prov. xi. 30.



of God himself, who came down from heaven to win souls, when the fruit of the righteous was the true tree of life.

Again—"A wholesome, or healing tongue is a tree of life; but perverseness therein is a breach of the spirit."\*

If this be so, in what passes about the affairs of the present world, how much more, when the concerns of another make the subject of conversation? When we extend the proverb to them, we cannot but think of the two capital instances, in which it was most signally verified. We detest the tongue, that "perverted" mankind from the path of life, and made a "breach in the spirit," at which sin entered, and death by sin. But everlasting benediction be upon that tongue, which spake, as no other ever did, or could speak, pardon, peace, and comfort to lost mankind. That was the tree of life, whose leaves were for the *healing* of the nations. "With the *tongue* confession is made unto *salvation*."

Once more. "Hope deferred, maketh the heart sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life."† This likewise is true, in temporals, of any object, long wished for, and at last possessed; but it is emphatically so of the hope of salvation, which, while it is deferred, maketh the heart sick; as we may find by the pathetic and forcible exclamations of those who waited for it in old time. But when the desire, that is, the object of the desire—he whom so many prophets and kings had earnestly desired to see, and did not see—he who was "the desire of all nations"—when he came, he proved the tree of life restored in the Paradise of God.

Two remarkable representations of things spiritual and divine under the gospel dispensation, or in the kingdom of heaven, were exhibited to Ezekiel and St. John. Let us compare them with each other, and both of them with the original scenery in Paradise, from which the images are evidently borrowed, and to which unless they are again referred, they lose half their beauty and significancy.

In Ezekiel's vision of the Christian church, under the figure of the second temple, he tells us, he saw "waters issuing from the sanctuary, and giving universal life, wherever they went."‡ St. John saw "a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and

\* Prov. xv. 4.

† Prov. xiii. 12.

‡ Ezek. xlvii. 1. 9.



the Lamb."\* And "a river," we know, "went forth," at the beginning, "to water and make glad the garden of God, in Eden."

"On the banks of the river, on this side, and on that side," Ezekiel beheld "very many trees;" or as it should, perhaps, be rendered, "a very great tree,"† "whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it (in the singular number) shall bring forth new fruit according to its months; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaves for medicine."‡ Let us now turn again to St. John—"In the midst of the street of it"—the New Jerusalem, succeeding in the place of Paradise, and the Old Jerusalem, with its temple and services—"in the midst of the street of it, and of either side the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruit, and yielded its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."§ Can we read either of these descriptions, without immediately carrying our thoughts back to Eden, where we see growing out of the ground, at the command of the Lord God, "every tree good for food, and pleasant to the sight, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden?"

But let us take a view of some other figures and sacraments, ordained since the fall of man, as the tree of life was appointed before it, to represent to the faithful the blessing of immortality.

The lost blessing was to be recovered and restored to the human race by the sufferings and death of a surety, who, after dying for our sins, was to rise again, for our justification. The grand institution, therefore, of this kind, commencing immediately upon the fall, and continuing in force to the death and resurrection of Christ, was sacrifice. A victim was brought to the altar, and being slain as a substitute for the offerer, first saved him from death, and then became food to support his life. And as Providence hath been ever careful to furnish us with continual mementos of the truths most important and interesting to us, it seems to be a circumstance worthy notice, that since the use of animals for food, and those chiefly which were made choice of in sacrifice, the world subsisteth by shedding of blood, and the death of the innocent is daily the life of the guilty.

\* Rev. xxii. 1. | עץ רב מאד † Ezek. xlvii. 12. § Rev. xxii. 2.

This is an additional reason, why every meal should be “sanctified,” according to the apostolical direction, “by the word of God, and by prayer,”\* while the meat that perisheth reminds us, in so lively and striking a manner, of that which endureth unto eternal life. The history of the Paschal Lamb, with the preservation of Israel from the hand of the destroyer, in that night to be remembered through all their generations, the night of their leaving Egypt, is a very particular, full, and beautiful exemplification of the nature and design of sacrifice. “Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us;” and therefore we too “keep the feast.”†

That miraculous supply of food, vouchsafed by God, to sustain his people, during their journey through the wilderness, till they came to the borders of Canaan, was another sign or symbol of immortal life, and its support derived from above. This new and extraordinary viand sprung not out of the earth, but came down, in rain, or dew, from heaven; white to the eye, sweet to the taste, and agreeable to every palate; given freely to all; proportioned to the necessities of each; and renewed day by day, till the sojournings of Israel were over, and the promised rest attained. St. Paul, having occasion to speak of those events, which, as he expresses it, “happened unto Israel for ensamples,”‡ as figures or shadows of things spiritual and divine, mentions this miracle, with that of the water brought out of the rock, in the following terms—“They did all eat the same spiritual meat; they did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock, which followed them; and that rock was Christ.”§ Our Lord, in the sixth chapter of St. John’s Gospel, discoursing with the Jews upon this subject, says to them—“Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the TRUE bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”|| Christ here styleth himself the TRUE bread, plainly in opposition to that which was shadowy and figurative. He is the TRUE bread, which cometh down from heaven, and is given, day by day, to nourish and support the Israel of God, the camp of the saints, the church militant, during *her* pilgrimage in the world, till she shall come to the promised inheritance,

\* 1 Tim. iv. 5.

† 1 Cor. v. 7.

‡ ΤΙΠΟΙ ΣΥΝΕΒΑΙΝΟΥΝ.

§ 1 Cor. x. 3, &amp;c.

|| John vi. 32.

the land of that everlasting rest, which remaineth for the people of God. There we shall find, and enjoy for ever, the truth and substance of this sacred figure. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the HIDDEN MANNA,"\* that is, to partake of that "life," which is "hid with Christ in God;" as the golden vessel of manna was laid up, for a memorial, in "the holy places made with hands."†

To the same purpose served that bread, called the *shew bread*, or *bread of the presence*,‡ set forth new, every morning, in the tabernacle and temple, and denoting the sustenance to be communicated to the souls of men from the body of Messiah; to prefigure which body, it is well known, that both tabernacle and temple were constructed under the direction of God himself.

Lastly—What the tree of life was to Adam in Paradise; what sacrifice in general was to the faithful, after the fall, from Abel downward; what the Paschal Lamb was to Israel quitting Egypt; what manna was to that people in the wilderness; what the shew bread was in the tabernacle and temple; all this, and if there be any other symbol of like import, it is now briefly comprehended, during the continuance of the Christian church upon earth, in the holy Eucharist. The former were prefigurative sacraments, this is a commemorative one. They showed forth the Messiah, and the life which is by him, until his first coming; this shows forth the same Messiah, and the same life, "until his coming again." Excluded from the tree of life in Paradise, we are admitted to partake of the bread of life in the church. Lost by the covenant of works, we are saved by that of grace. A cheering voice calls to us from the sanctuary, "Draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort." The elements are honoured with the names of the body and blood of Christ, because appointed to signify and convey, to the worthy communicant, the blessings purchased by his body broken, and his blood shed, upon the cross; blessings to the soul, like the benefits conferred upon the body by bread and wine; life, health, strength, comfort, and joy.

Such have been the different symbols and sacraments

\* Rev. ii. 17. † Exod. xvi. 33. Heb. ix. 4. ‡ לחם פנים.

vouchsafed to mankind under different dispensations, all representing and shadowing out a glorious immortality in another and better world, where we shall sit down with the Author and Giver of it, at his table, to eat bread, and drink of the fruit of the vine, new in his kingdom; where we shall give glory to the Lamb that was slain; where we shall partake of the hidden manna, and eat the fruit of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

From the passages of scripture thus laid together, the nature and design of the tree of life in Eden seem sufficiently clear. And, upon a review of what hath been said, it is impossible not to admire the consistency and uniformity running through both Testaments, from the second chapter of the Genesis of Moses, to the twenty-second of St. John's Revelation, which so mutually illustrate and explain each other. The analogy of faith, in this instance, proclaims aloud the wisdom and harmony of the divine dispensations, from the creation to the consummation of all things.

At sundry times, in divers manners, and by various instruments, hath heaven conveyed instruction to man. But the instruction conveyed, with the terms and figures employed to convey it, bespeak, at all times, the hand of the same omniscient and beneficent Author. They must be construed and expounded upon the same plan; and, when rightly construed and expounded, will be found to terminate in the same awful and interesting objects, eternal life, and the means of its attainment. To these great ends serve the symbols of Paradise, the sacrifices of the patriarchs, the types of the law, the visions of the prophets, and the sacraments of the gospel, with the numberless expressions and descriptions borrowed from them, and referring to them. These constitute a kind of *sacred language* peculiar to holy writ, and only explicable by it. The knowledge of this language is a science by itself, and the study of it, well worthy the attention of such as have leisure and abilities to prosecute it, is its own rich and exceeding great reward. The subjects are of such infinite moment, that all others must, in comparison, appear to be as nothing. And the dress, in which they are presented to us, is the most ornamental and engaging in the world. It is of that kind, to which both eloquence and poetry, among men, owe all their charms. The doctrines of scripture are not proposed in a naked logical form.



but arrayed in the most beautiful and striking images which the creation affords.\*

A celebrated and well known author, whose essays have long been the established standard of true taste, and fine writing, makes, in one of them, the following observations:—"By similitudes drawn from the visible parts of nature, a truth in the understanding is, as it were, reflected by the imagination: we are able to see something like colour and shape in a notion, and to discover a scheme of thoughts traced out upon matter. And here the mind receives a great deal of satisfaction, and has two of its faculties gratified at the same time, while the fancy is busy in copying after the understanding, and transcribing ideas out of the intellectual world into the material. It is this talent of affecting the imagination that gives an embellishment to good sense, and makes one man's compositions more agreeable than another's. It has something in it like creation, and bestows a kind of existence. It makes additions to nature, and gives greater variety to God's works. In a word, it is able to beautify and adorn the most illustrious scenes in the universe, and to fill the mind with more glorious shows and apparitions than can be found in any part of it."†

Perhaps it is impossible any where to meet with juster sentiments than these are, clothed in more apt and elegant expressions. And this single passage would have sufficed to establish the reputation so justly acquired by its author. The inference I would beg leave to make from it is this: If such be the case in human compositions, where similitudes are drawn by short-sighted man, to illustrate things temporal; what must it be, when they are drawn, to illustrate things eternal, by him, who has a perfect knowledge of the nature and properties of the objects from whence they are drawn, as well as of those to which they are applied; nay, who, doubtless, created the visible world, among other purposes, for that, to which he himself, in his revelations to mankind, has so continually employed it, that of serving as a picture, or representation of the world at present invisible? "Eye hath not seen," says an apostle, "nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive

\* See Lord Bacon's "Advancement of Learning," b. vi. c. 3.

† Mr. Addison's concluding paper on the "Pleasures of the Imagination."—Spectator VI. No. 421.



the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;”\* and the Spirit, knowing our infirmities, and whereof we are made, hath revealed them, from the beginning, by external signs, symbols, sacraments, and a figurative language, supplied by them. Upon this very principle it is, that another acknowledged master of style and composition grounds the character of the sacred writings, considered in that view — “Eloquence (says he) is that which persuades: it persuades by moving; it moves by things, and palpable ideas only: and hence no eloquence is so perfect as that of the scriptures; since the most spiritual and metaphysical things are there represented by sensible and lively images.”†

In justification of this remark, let the appeal, in the instance now before us, be made to every one endued with sensibility. The position to be laid down is, that through the alone merits of the Redeemer, we now inherit eternal life. Is it possible for all the art of man to convey this truth in terms so pleasing and informing, as those few used by St. John, with allusion to the scenery in Eden — “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. And in the midst of the street of the New Jerusalem, and and of either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

To whom, then, blessed Lord Jesu, should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Thou art the true tree of life, in the midst of the Paradise of God. For us men, and for our salvation, thou didst condescend to be planted, in a lowly form, upon the earth. But thy head soon reached to heaven, and thy branches to the ends of the earth. Thy head is crowned with glory, and thy branches are the

\* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Rollin, “*Belles Lettres*,” ii. 360. — “To quarrel with our Maker about this way of proceeding, would be to blame him for conveying truths to us in the most affecting and agreeable manner; or for creating us with those faculties, which are fitted to receive truths thus conveyed. For the most important truths, as we are framed at present, can make but a slight impression on the mind, unless they enter first like a picture, into the imagination, and from thence are stamped on the memory.” — Peters, “*Crit. Diss. on the Book of Job*,” Part. i. Sect. x.

branches of honour and grace. Medicinal are thy leaves to heal every malady, and thy fruits are all the blessings of immortality. It is our hope, our support, our comfort, and all our joy, to reflect, that, wearied with the labours, and worn out with the cares and sorrows of a fallen world, we shall sit down under thy shadow with great delight, and thy fruit shall be sweet to our taste !

## DISCOURSE IV.

### THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE.

*Of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat.*  
Gen. ii. 17.

THIS is the first and the only law recorded to have been promulged in the state of man's innocence. It may therefore be reasonably supposed to have contained in itself the substance of many other laws. Its comprehension may be inferred likewise from its importance. The transgression of it occasioned the fall of the human race, and introduced the necessity of a redemption by the Son of God.

Could we ascertain with precision what is intended by *the knowledge of good and evil*, such a discovery might possibly furnish us with a key to this part of scripture, and to the transactions relative to the trial of our first parents in Paradise. Let us therefore begin with an inquiry into the true meaning of these words.

By the knowledge of good and evil the generality of commentators understand *experimental* knowledge ; and they suppose the name to have been given to the tree by a *prolepsis*, because, in the event, through man's transgression, it was to become the means of his attaining the experimental knowledge of evil ; thus purchasing to himself a knowledge of good, manifested and illustrated by comparison with its opposite ; as a person is then said to understand the nature and value of health, when he has been deprived of it by sickness.

That such was the effect of the transgression, is certain: but it is not, perhaps, so certain, that this is the right interpretation of the phrase, which is by no means peculiar to this place, but occurs in other parts of the sacred writings, where it cannot be taken in the sense assigned. Nay, there are two passages even in the third chapter of Genesis itself, which do not admit of such exposition. The tempter assures the woman, that, on eating the fruit, they should be as gods, “knowing good and evil.” And the Almighty afterward says, “Man is become like one of us, *knowing good and evil*.” Now the knowledge of good and evil possessed by the Deity cannot possibly be that produced by the experimental knowledge of evil. Let us examine into the usage of the words elsewhere.

In Deuteronomy we read—“Moreover your little ones which ye said should be a prey, and your children which in that day had no *knowledge of good and evil*, they shall go in thither.”\* Here, to know good and evil is, evidently, to know the nature of both, and so to form a judgment upon that knowledge, as to choose the one, and refuse the other. Thus again, the same sentiment is expressed in the well known passage of Isaiah, “Before the child shall know *to refuse the evil, and choose the good*.”† And again, the woman of Tekoah says to David, “As an angel of God, so is my lord the king, *to discern good and bad*,”‡ that is, to distinguish, judge, and act accordingly. This last passage is similar to those before cited from Genesis, and must explain them; namely, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;” and, “Man is become like one of us, to know good and evil.” It may be added, that a New Testament writer uses the words in the very same sense. For the apostle, speaking of adults in Christianity, as opposed to babes in the faith, styles them such as have “their senses exercised *to discern good and evil*.”§

Such being the plain and acknowledged import of the expression in other parts of the scriptures, why should we suppose it to be different in the instance before us? Let us rather conclude it to be the same.

The question then will be, how could this tree in the garden of Eden confer a knowledge of good and evil? How could it enable man to discern the nature of each? How

\* Deut. i. 39.    † Isa. vii. 15.    ‡ 2 Sam. xiv. 17.    § Heb. v. 14.

could it inform him which was to be pursued, and which to be avoided?

Shall we say, with the Jewish writers, that there was any virtue in the fruit, to clarify the understanding, and so to teach man knowledge? But if so, why was it prohibited? For the knowledge, which we suppose to be implied in the phrase, is perfective of man's nature; it is true wisdom; and if he really acquired it by tasting the forbidden fruit, he was much benefited by transgression. We must therefore determine, that the tree was designed to teach the knowledge of good and evil, or to be productive of true wisdom, not in a physical, but in a moral way. It instructed our first parents to fly from and avoid death, and the cause of death, which must have been in some manner denoted by this tree; as they were directed to choose life, and the cause of life, signified to them by the other tree, which bore that appellation.

The prohibition, being calculated for man's trial, was at the same time calculated to give him the information necessary for that purpose. Such is the nature and design of every law. It conveys the knowledge of good and evil by prohibiting the latter, and consequently enjoining the former. "By the law (says St. Paul) is the knowledge of sin. I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."\* It is the law, in every case, respectively, which gives the knowledge of good and evil. Obedience to it is good, and the reward is life; disobedience is evil, and the penalty, death. And the trial of man, thus informed, is, whether he will obey, or disobey; in order to the manifestation of the lawgiver's justice, wisdom, power, and glory, by rewarding or punishing him, as he does the one or the other. The difficulty lies here,—Why an action, to appearance so unimportant and insignificant, as that of eating or forbearing to eat the fruit of a tree, should have been appointed as the test of his obedience?

To solve this difficulty, let it be considered, that, beside those laws usually termed *moral*, and supposed to speak their own fitness and propriety, from an obvious view of the nature and constitution of things, it is not strange or uncommon for God to try the love and obedience of man by other precepts, styled *positive* and *ceremonial*. Such was the

\* Rom. viii. 7.



order for Abraham to quit his country, and kindred, and afterward, to offer his son Isaac: upon which latter occasion, notwithstanding the proofs before given by him of an obedient spirit, God was pleased to say, "Now I know thou fearest God."\* Such were the ritual observances regarding sacrificature and other particulars, observed among the patriarchs, and afterward with additions, republished in form by Moses. Such are the injunctions to abstinence and self-denial, with the institutions of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, among Christians. What hath been thus done under every other dispensation, was done likewise in Paradise.

And as touching these same precepts called *positive*, even they are not, what they are sometimes deemed to be, arbitrary precepts, given for no other reason, but because it is the will of God to give them. They carry in them a reason, which, though it may not be discoverable, unless revealed, is yet nevertheless founded on the state of human nature, its relation to God, and its various wants, at different times, and in different situations. The observation, indeed, made by an eminent casuist † with respect to human laws, holds much stronger with respect to laws divine.—"The obedience of that man is much too delicate, who insists upon knowing the reasons of all laws before he will obey them. The legislator must be supposed to have given his sanction from the reason of the thing; but where we cannot discover the reason of it, the sanction is to be the only reason of our obedience." This observation, I say, is most certainly a just one. But as a wise God acts not without the highest reason, so a gracious God, in his dispensations to his reasonable creatures, has, in many instances, with his commands, communicated the reasons on which they were founded, and has even condescended to argue with his people, on the justice and rectitude of his proceedings.

Services outward and visible have been enjoined. They have been always enjoined. But then they have always been symbolical of dispositions and actions, inward and spiritual. When this is the case, from unimportant and insignificant, they become the most important and significant transactions in the world. An uninformed person, living in the times of persecution under the heathen emperors, must

\* Gen. xxii. 12.

† Bishop Taylor,



have been, to the last degree, astonished and confounded, when told, that a Christian was in danger of eternal rejection from the presence of God, if he scattered an handful of incence on the fire ; and that he was bound, by his religion, rather to die in torments, than submit to do it. But every objection vanishes in a moment, when we know, that such an action, in a Christian so circumstanced, was a token of renouncing his God and Saviour, and acknowledging a false object of worship.

To come a little nearer to the point in question. Know we not, that the action of *eating*, in particular, from the beginning, both among believers and unbelievers, has ever been esteemed and constituted an action symbolical of religious affection ; and that, in the days of St. Paul, a man denominated himself either one or the other, as he partook of the Lord's table, or the table of an idol ? What were these, in the new Paradise, the church Christian, but the tree of life, and the tree of death ? Why should it seem incredible, or absurd, that, in man's original trial, the same action should have been, in some manner, significative of the same affection ? And if in that truly golden age of innocence, health, and felicity, the food allotted to man was of the vegetable kind, then the fruit of a *tree* must of course be the subject of the prohibition. In after ages, under the law of Moses, and the permission of animal food, the figurative system of rites was artificial and sanguinary ; but in the sacred grove of Eden, that first tabernacle or temple, planted for a place of worship as well as of abode, the whole of the religious scenery was composed of the beautiful and luxuriant productions of primeval nature, unstained with blood, when as yet there was no malediction upon the ground.

This consideration satisfies the mind, and removes every objection made to the nature of the test, and the wisdom of God in appointing it. For if in this, as in other dispensations, the action of eating was intended to be symbolical of some mental disposition or affection, whether we can now ascertain particulars, or not, all the buffoonery of infidelity falls to the ground at once. The trial of Adam, like that of every other man, was, whether he would so far believe in God, as to look for happiness in obedience to the divine command ; or would seek that hap-

piness elsewhere, and apply for it to some forbidden object, of which the tree must have been an emblematical representation.

You will ask, what that object was? And what information, as to the knowledge of good and evil, Adam could receive from the prohibition? By answering the last question, a way may, in some measure, perhaps, be opened for an answer to the first.

A due contemplation of the prohibition might naturally suggest to the mind of our first parent the following important truths; especially if we consider (as we must and ought to consider) that to him, under the tuition of his Maker, all things necessary were explained and made clear, how obscure soever they may appear to us, forming a judgment of them from a very concise narrative, couched in figurative language, at this distance of time.

Looking upon the tree of knowledge, then, and recollecting the precept of which it was the subject, Adam might learn, that God was the sovereign Lord of all things: that the dominion vested in man over the creatures was by no means a dominion absolute and independent: that without, and beside God, there was no true and real good: that to desire any thing without and beside him, was evil; that no temporal worldly good, however fair and tempting its appearance, was to be fixed upon by man, as the source of his felicity: that the sole rule for shunning, or desiring things sensible, should be the will and word of God; and that good and evil should be judged of by that standard alone: that the obedience, which God would accept, must be paid with all the powers and affections of the mind, showing itself careful and prompt in every the least instance: that man was not yet placed in a state of consummate and established bliss; but that such state was by him to be earnestly expected, and incessantly desired; and that he must take the way to it, marked and pointed out by God himself.\*

These particulars seem to flow from the prohibition in an easy and natural train. And they lead us to answer the other question; namely,—What was the object represented by the tree of knowledge? It was that object, on which man is prone to set his affections, instead of placing them

\* See *Vtringa*, *Observ. Sacr.* vol. xi. lib. iv. cap. 12.—From whom many of the sentiments in this Discourse are borrowed.

on a better; it was that object, which, in every age, has been the great rival of the Almighty, in the human heart; it was that object, which, in one way or other, has always been "worshipped and served rather than the Creator;" it was the CREATURE, the WORLD; and the grand trial was, as it ever hath been, and ever will be, till the world shall cease to exist, whether things visible, or things invisible, should obtain the preference; whether man should walk "by sight, or by faith." To know this, was the knowledge of good and evil; and this knowledge came by the law of God, which said, "Thou shalt not covet."\* Man's wisdom consisted in the observation of that law; but an enemy persuaded him to seek wisdom by transgressing it. He did so; and had nothing left, but to repent of his folly; a case that happens, among his descendants, every day, and every hour.

Let us, therefore, consider the tree of knowledge, in this light, with respect to its nature, situation, design, qualities, effects, and the knowledge conferred by it.

The fruit of this tree was, to appearance, fair and pleasant; but, when tasted, it became, by the Divine appointment, the cause of death. Now, what is it, which, in the eyes of all mankind, seems equally pleasing and alluring, but the end thereof, when coveted in opposition to the divine command, proves to be death? It is the world, with its pleasures and its glories, desired by its votaries, *per fas atque nefas*, to the denial of God, and to their own destruction. The scriptures proclaim this aloud, and the experience of all generations confirms their testimony. Indeed, what is there in the universe, but the Creator and the creature? And between whom, but them, can the contest subsist for the love and obedience of man?

The tree of knowledge was situated in the midst of the garden, as was the tree of life. They stood near together, but they stood in opposition. The divine dispensations are always best illustrated by each other. Under the gospel, Jesus Christ is the tree of life. What is it that opposes him, and, notwithstanding all that he has done, and suffered, and commanded, and promised, and threatened, is continually, by its solicitations, being ever present and at hand, seducing men into the path of death? Scripture

\* Οὐκ επιθυμησης.

and experience again join in assuring us, that it is the world. When we are in the house of God, which is Eden restored, engaged in hearing his word; and, in the exercises of devotion, we sit down, as it were, under the shadow of the tree of life. No sooner are we gone from it, and too often even while we are there, the world intrudes, and draws off to other subjects our thoughts and our affections. What saith Moses under the law? "Behold, I set before you this day, life and good, death and evil; choose ye."\* Are not these the two trees of Paradise? But imagination cannot form to itself a more exquisite and affecting piece of scenery upon this subject, than that exhibited by king Solomon in the book of Proverbs; a book, whose end and design is, to teach us the true knowledge of good and evil, that we may pursue the one, and avoid the other. In his 7th chapter, under the usual figure of an harlot, loosely decked in a profusion of vain ornaments, he introduces the world, or the false wisdom thereof, by its several fictitious charms, and meretricious blandishments, alluring the unwary to the chambers of destruction. In the succeeding chapter, by way of perfect contrast, appears, in the beauty and majesty of holiness, the offspring of the Almighty, the Son of the Father, the true and eternal wisdom of God, with all the tender love and affectionate concern of a parent, inviting men to the substantial joys and unfading pleasures of immortality, in the house of salvation. Again, we are presented with the tree of death, and the tree of life. From Solomon let us pass to St. Paul. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life. If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."† Behold once more the trees of death and life. Such, in good truth, is the face of things every where offering itself to view; such is the contest incessantly carrying on in this present world, which, on the one hand, entices the children of Adam, by giving themselves up to its enjoyments, to taste the tree of death; while the Redeemer, on the other, still continues to cry aloud by his word, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life."

The tree of knowledge was designed to be the test of Adam's obedience, the subject matter of his trial. The

\* Dent. xxx. 15.

† Rom. viii. 6. 13.



world, with its desirable objects, is the test of our obedience, the subject matter of our trial, whether we will make it our chief good, or prefer the promise of God to it. Thus, the trial of Abraham was, whether he would quit his country, and kindred, and yield up his only son in obedience to the divine command, trusting to a recompense in reversion. The trial of Job was, whether he would still serve God, when deprived of his possessions, his family, and his health. After this sort, was our Lord Jesus Christ himself proved by the most powerful incitement of the human passions. Of the tree of knowledge Satan tempted him to put forth his hand, and take, and eat, that the second Adam might be tried after the example of the first. The disciples also are tried in like manner with their blessed Master. They are instructed to renounce the world, and to deny themselves; which is only the original prohibition in other words; "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat."

The apparent qualities of the forbidden tree are represented to have been these. It seemed "good for food, and fair to the sight, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." It is remarkable, that St. John, laying before us an inventory of the world, and all that is in it, employs a division entirely similar. "Love not the world," says he, "neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the desire thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever."\* Here is a picture of the fatal tree, full blown, with all its temptations about it, drawn, by the pencil of truth, in its original and proper colours. The expressions tally, to the minutest degree of exactness. The "desire of the flesh" answers to "good for food;" the "desire of the eyes" is parallel with "fair to the sight;" and the "pride of life" corresponds with "a tree to be desired to make one wise." The opposition between this tree and the other is strongly marked. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And, we are informed, that one leads to death, the other to life. "The world passeth

\* 1 John xi. 15.



away, and the desire thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever." Precisely conformable, in every circumstance, was the threefold temptation of the second Adam. He was tempted to convert stones into bread for food, to satisfy "the desire of the flesh;" he was tempted with the kingdoms of the world and the glories of them, to satisfy "the desire of the eyes;" he was tempted to work a miracle on the pinnacle of the temple, and to show himself moving aloft through the air in the sight of the multitude, to display "the pride of life." He repelled the tempter, as our first parents should have done, and as we, their children, should do now, instead of judging according to appearances, by a firm and resolute appeal to the revelation of God.

Thus, whether we consider the tree of knowledge as to its nature, its situation, its design, or its qualities, it seems to have been a very apt and significant emblem of the creature, or the world, with its delights and its glories, the objects opposed, in every age, to God and his word. To reject the allurements of the former, and obey the dictates of the latter, is the knowledge of good and evil, and the true wisdom of man. So that the forbidden tree in Paradise, when the divine intentions concerning it are explained from other parts of scripture, teaches the important lesson more than once inculcated by Solomon, and which was likewise the result of holy Job's inquiries; "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is WISDOM; and to DEPART FROM EVIL IS UNDERSTANDING."

Whoever shall attentively reflect on the evidence which has been produced, and duly consider the perfect coincidence and harmony of the scriptures and dispensations of God upon the subject, will, perhaps, be convinced, that, in the main, we must have fixed upon the true exposition of "the knowledge of good and evil," and the nature of man's original trial. There is a doubt, or difficulty, which offers itself, and may seem to require a solution. It is this. We all know, as the state of human affairs is at present, by what manner, and by what temptations, the world solicits our desires after objects forbidden; but what temptation, you will say, could it hold forth to our first parents, existing alone, invested with sovereignty over it, and possessed of all its pleasures, and its glories, in the garden

of Eden? This question will, perhaps, be best answered, by asking one or two more. What temptation, then, let it be asked, could the world present to the people of God, when placed in the land of promise, and blessed with every species of temporal felicity? What temptation can the world present to a pious Christian, placed by Providence in a state of affluence, and furnished with every good that his heart can wish for? The truth is, that the world, even supposing it to have been lawfully attained, and to be in ever so good hands, has *this* power of temptation; it may engage the attention of the human mind, and attract to itself the affections of the human heart, till, by degrees, its Maker is forsaken and forgotten. It may induce a man to consider it as an abode, and no longer to desire a removal to higher and better things with God above. “Beware (says Moses), lest when thou hast eaten, and art full, thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God.”\* This proved to be the case with the Israelites. It is the temptation too often fatal both to nations and individuals, when indulged by heaven with success and prosperity. And if the world, obscured as its brightness has been by the fall, can and does now produce such an effect on the wisest of those that are at any time favoured with a large share of it, how much more must it have been able to charm, and to deceive, when first formed in perfect beauty! Considering this circumstance, and withal, how “the creature,” in the earliest ages, was “worshipped and served, instead of the Creator,” one is almost ready to think it possible, that idolatry itself might take its beginning in Eden.

From the sad experience of those who have gone before us, let us learn to have recourse to the law of God for our *knowledge of good and evil*, and to refrain from the fruit of the forbidden tree, the tree of death. Of this fruit, though proceeding from the same root, there have been different kinds put forth and exhibited in different periods of time, agreeable to the turn and temper of each. In the days of the patriarchs, and of the Israelites, it was the worship of the material elements, or powers of nature, in the place of Him who made them, accompanied with every kind of impurity. Such was the religion of the revolted nations,

\* Deut. viii. 14.

and such the rites with which it was celebrated. Yet such a religion, and such rites, the people of God, for many ages, notwithstanding all that he did for them, and said to them, strange as it may appear to us at present, were ever ready to adopt and embrace. They apostatised to idolatry, with the divine glory blazing before their eyes, on the top of Sinai. Nor could the wisest and greatest of their princes afterward escape the contagion. This corruption, which the Babylonish captivity, like a well applied caustic, served to eat out, and to do away, was succeeded by a disease of another kind, but one that stuck to them, till it destroyed them; a mistake as to the nature of their economy; a confidence in externals; a deep hypocrisy; a spirit wholly secularized; an ambition to have all the kingdoms of the world subject to Jerusalem, and the wealth and glory of them centered there. "The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life," were chosen in opposition to the celestial fruits of love and obedience, humility and charity, faith and holiness, produced among them by Jesus Christ, the tree of immortality. They "put forth the hand, and tasted." But soon the exterminating angel dispossessed them of their Paradise, and they died the death.

Since the ascension of Christ, the heathen world has been converted to the gospel, and that desert has become the garden of the Lord. But in this garden also—is there no tree of death? No specious fruit held forth, to entice the unwise to perdition? What is the doctrine, which, in some parts of Christendom, gives adoration to beings that are not God; or that, which, in others, denies it to Him who is so? What is the scheme, that asserts the non-necessity of a divine revelation, claiming to man the right, and attributing to him the power of making a religion for himself, and prescribing to his Maker the terms of his own acceptance? What is the atheistical policy, which excludes the Creator from the care of his works, and his providence from the kingdoms of the earth? What is that system of paganism revived under the name and notion of *philosophy*, as opposed to Christianity, and every thing that is called religion, by which either the Deity is materialized, or matter deified? What is that unbounded licentiousness in principles and manners, daily growing more and more into vogue, and shamelessly, by some of the new philosophers, defended in

form? What is the luxury, the splendour, the extravagance, the dissipation, the abandoned profligacy, and ungodliness of the age?

Behold the flourishing state of the fatal tree! View the extent of its branches, and the abundance of its fruit, in these latter days! But remember, that, still—the end is death; to a nation, excision; to individuals, without repentance and faith, destruction everlasting from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall descend into his garden to make inquisition, and call offenders to their final account. Be not ye therefore deceived and seduced, however the temptation may seem “fair to the sight, and good for food;” however “desirable” it may be represented “to make you wise.” Take your direction, through life, from the word of God, and be not prevailed upon to falsify, or transgress it. The conflict may be sharp, but it will be soon over; bear up resolutely under it; and for your consolation and encouragement in the hour of trial, when strongly solicited to taste the tree of death, listen to that strength-conferring voice, which crieth from the eternal throne, in words that will bear a repetition—“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

## DISCOURSE V.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE.

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even unto sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.—Zech. ix. 9, 10.*

THIS prophecy was delivered by Zechariah, five hundred years before the Advent of Christ. And St. Matthew, in the gospel appointed for this day, affirmeth it to have had



its accomplishment, when our Lord entered Jerusalem, in the manner here described, amidst the acclamations of the attending multitude. "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." The prediction is of the literal kind, and it was literally and most exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. No other king, with these characteristic marks upon him, ever thus came to Sion before him; and since the Jews rejected him, they have lost their temple, their city, and their country; nor has there been any Sion, to which their king might come. Jerusalem would not rejoice on the day when the prophet had enjoined her to rejoice; and therefore she hath had cause to mourn from that day to this. The rulers of Sion were vexed and chagrined at beholding a scene, which should have excited them to shout aloud for joy. The disciples, indeed, exulted, and sang, Hosanna to the Son of David. Could Messiah enter his capital, unacknowledged? That was impossible. Had men been silent upon this occasion, the buildings and pavements of the city must have supplied the defect, and borne their attestation to the promised and long expected King of Israel. "I tell you," replied our Lord to the Pharisees, who desired him to rebuke his disciples, "I tell you, that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

That we may perceive the full force and beauty of the prophecy before us, it will be necessary to show its connexion with the preceding part of the chapter, wherein it stands.

In this ninth chapter of his prophecy, Zechariah denounceth some of the divine judgments, which were executed by that scourge of heaven, Alexander the Great, when he overran Syria, took Damascus, burnt Tyre, destroyed Gaza, and, in imitation of his favourite hero, dragged the governor thereof at his chariot wheels. "The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof—And Hamath also shall border thereby, Tyrus and Sidon though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire. Askalon shall

see it and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and shall be very sorrowful, and Ekron: for her expectation shall be ashamed, and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Askelon shall not be inhabited." The prophet next foretelleth the mixture and incorporation of the Philistines, when thus humbled by Alexander, with their old enemies the Jews. "And a bastard," or an alien generation (*αλλογενεις*, say the LXX), "shall dwell in Ashdod; and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines; and I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; but he that remaineth, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah and Ekron as a Jebusite." Amidst these revolutions and alterations of affairs in the world, God promiseth, in the next verse, to preserve his temple, while so many castles and strong holds about Jerusalem were overturned, so many cities swept of their inhabitants by the besom of destruction. "And I will encamp about mine house, because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more; for now have I seen with mine eyes." Then followeth the prophecy in my text—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." As if the prophet had spoken in more words to Jerusalem thus—"Thine eyes, in the generations following, shall behold the flourishing pride of sundry nations, each endeavouring to overtop others in height of glory, and temporal state; each striving to keep others under, by human policy, or strength of war. And whilst the sight of their mutual conquests shall possess thy thoughts, thou wilt be ready, in the pride of thine heart, to say, Jerusalem and Judah one day shall have their turn, and in that day shall the sons of Jacob, the seed of Abraham and David, be like the monarchs of Greece and Persia, far exalted above the kings of other nations: every one, able to bear arms, glistening with his golden shield, and leading

the princes of the heathen, as prisoners, bound in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron. The beauty and riches of their costly temples shall deck the chariots of my children, which their captives shall draw in triumph. But thou shouldest remember, that the promised Prince of Peace, of benignity and justice, should not be sought among the tumultuous hosts of war: nor canst thou hope that he, who is the desire of all nations, should be thy leader or general to destroy those nations. It is glory and honour enough for thee, glory and honour greater than the greatest conqueror on earth could ever compass, that the King of kings and Lord of lords shall be anointed and proclaimed King upon the hill of Sion: that the inviolable decrees of everlasting peace shall be given to all the nations under heaven from thy courts. And therefore while horses and chariots, and other glorious preparations of war, shall present themselves to thy view, suffer them to pass as they come, and rest assured, that thy King, of whose coming thou hast often been admonished by the prophets, is not among them. The manner of his coming to thee, so thou wilt mark it, bodes far better tidings to thee and all the nations besides, than can accompany the prosperous success of wars, or any victory stained with blood. What king of Judah or Israel did ever levy an army, though in just defence of their country and people, on so fair terms, that no poor amongst them were pinched with taxes for the supply? What victory did they ever obtain so cheap, that many of their children were not forced to sit down with loss, many wounded, others maimed, and some always slain. But, lo, now I bring thee unusual matter of exultation and joy. For behold thy King cometh unto thee, whensoever he cometh, attended with justice for his guide, and salvation for his train. He shall execute judgment without oppression: he shall save thee, so thou wilt be saved, without destroying any, being able to make thy lame to go, to give life to thy dead, without hazard either of life or limb to any that rests within thy territories. Such shall be the manner of his coming, and such his presence, that the poorest wretch among thy children may think himself more happy than any king of Judah or Israel which was before him, so he will but conform himself to the temper and demeanour of his Saviour. For he cometh unto thee poor and lowly,

riding upon an ass, to wean thee from the vain hopes of the heathen, from which the prophets have so often dehorted thy forefathers. Some put their trust in horses, and some in chariots; but thy confidence must be in the Lord thy God, who will always be thy King, to defend thee, to protect thee, to strengthen thee through this weakness.”\*

Having thus taken a general view of the prophecy, proceed we to make some observations and reflections upon the several parts of it, in the order in which they lie.

Beautiful and striking is the manner in which it is introduced. The prophet doth not coldly inform Jerusalem, that her King should come to her, and that, when he did come, she ought to rejoice. Wrapped into future times, he seems to have been present at the glorious scene. Standing upon mount Olivet, he hears the Hosanna's of the disciples, and beholds the procession approach toward the gates of Jerusalem: he turns himself to the city, and breaks forth in transport, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!” Religion, then, hath its joys; a prophet calleth us to exult and shout; and often as this holy season returneth, the church secondeth his call. Her services dispel the gloom of melancholy, and put gladness into the hearts of all her children. They are wonderfully calculated to renew good impressions in our minds, to increase our faith, to invigorate our hope, to blow up the sacred fires of devotion and charity, and to fill us with all holy and heavenly tempers. They produce a joy “which no man taketh from us,” and in which “a stranger intermeddleth not;” they inspire a pleasure which no pain can overcome, of which no time can deprive us, and which death will perfect and ensure to us for ever. Perverse Jerusalem rejected joy, and chose sorrow for her portion. Glad tidings came to the Gentiles, and were gladly received. The Christian church, formed of them, is now the daughter of Sion, and the new Jerusalem. To her the promises are transferred, and made good. She therefore obeyeth the prophet's injunction; she continually, with the holy Virgin, “magnifieth the Lord, and her spirit rejoiceth in God her Saviour.”

The next words of our prophet assign the reason why Jerusalem was called upon to rejoice, namely, the approach

\* Dr. Jackson, vol. ii. p. 845.



of her King; "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee." A person was to visit Jerusalem, who should deserve to be emphatically styled "her King." The nations had their kings and conquerors, their Nebuchadnezzars and Cyrus's, their Alexanders and Cæsars; these appeared, in their turns, upon the stage, contending for the empire of the world. Each performed the part assigned him by an all directing Providence, and then vanished away. Sion beheld all these changes, and still survived the commotions occasioned by them. The prophets had promised her a King, who should overcome her enemies, and triumph gloriously; who should erect, in the time of the fourth great monarchy, an universal and everlasting kingdom, and give laws to the world; nay, who should govern all things in heaven and earth. At the time predicted, not only Jerusalem looked for a completion of the prophecies, but the whole earth sat still, expecting that Judea should give her a King. And lo, the promised King of the Jews is born of the royal house and lineage of David. All the circumstances of his birth, the words of his mouth, and the actions of his life, demonstrate him to be the Messiah, foretold by the prophets from the beginning of the world. He cometh to his own, and Jerusalem is commanded to rejoice and shout; but his own receive him not, and Jerusalem turns a deaf ear to the voices of all her prophets, not suffering herself to believe that any thing said by them could refer to Jesus of Nazareth. Her heart was depraved and hardened: she demanded to be put in possession of the empire of this world; she despised the appearance of her King, with the acclamations of an ignoble multitude, and soon nailed a SPIRITUAL monarch to the cross.

With how different sensations are the members of the church Christian affected, when they hear the words of Zechariah, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee," and read the history of their accomplishment in the gospel for this day. With inexpressible delight we carry back our thoughts to that happy era, when the King of the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, made his appearance in the flesh. We join his train, we attend him in his progress toward Jerusalem, and seem to enter with him into the holy city, while "the multitude of those who go before, and those who follow after, cry, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he that

cometh in the name of the Lord." When we behold this scene, as presented to our view at this season, we are taught to conceive by it a noble idea of Messiah, at his first advent, ushered into the church, as her Lord and King, the prophets going before, and the apostles following after him, all proclaiming and bearing testimony to Jesus, all singing Hosannah to the Son of David, all pronouncing the blessedness of him, who thus cometh in the name of Jehovah. We know that this is He to whom all the prophets give witness, and that he hath fulfilled those things which were written of him. We know, that he hath overcome our enemies, and triumphed gloriously; that he hath erected an universal and everlasting kingdom, and given laws to the world; nay, that he doth govern all things in heaven and earth. Of the manner in which he achieved his victories, and of the nature and extent of his kingdom, we shall have occasion to speak, as we proceed to consider the character which our prophet hath drawn of this King of Israel. "He is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding on an ass."

Righteousness, salvation, and humility, distinguish the person and reign of Messiah. Righteousness leads the way. "He is just, or righteous." St. Stephen, in his apology to the Jews, affirmeth the prophets to have fore-shown the coming of Jesus, under the title of the Just One. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."\* David, in spirit, thus addresseth King Messiah, as we are assured by St. Paul's application of the passage in the first chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews.—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."† Jeremiah describeth him as righteous himself, and as making others so.—"The days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch: and a King shall reign, and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth—And this is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."‡ And indeed, we seldom find the kingdom

\* Acts vii. 52.

† Ps. xlv. 5.

‡ Jer. xxiii. 6.

of Christ mentioned, but righteousness is immediately mentioned, as the first fruits of it. Righteousness, the Astræa of the ancients, left the earth at the fall of Adam, and returned again to visit and to bless it, at the birth of Christ. He was conceived without stain, lived without sin, and died without guilt. He conversed in the world, yet contracted none of its pollution, but, like his glorious emblem the light, passed through all things undefiled. His bitterest enemies, Jews and Gentiles, joined to attest his uprightness. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man,"\* said the wife of Pilate. Pilate himself, upon the strictest examination, declared, "I find no fault in this man."† Judas, who had every possible opportunity of knowing the character of his Master, cried out, in an agony of despair, "I have betrayed the innocent blood;"‡ and the Roman centurion, who watched at the cross, gave in his evidence, "Certainly, this was a righteous man."§ The kingdom which he came to establish was a kingdom of righteousness. He called men from the ways of sin by his sermons, he allured them from its pleasures by his example, he cleansed them from its guilt by his blood, and rescued them from its power by his Spirit. Where the gospel came, idolatry gave place to true piety; every holy and amiable temper was planted and flourished in the hearts of the regenerate; and to be a Christian, was to be every thing that was honest, and just, and good. Thus did Jesus of Nazareth answer his title of "the Just One," and evince himself to be the true "Melchisedek," or "King of Righteousness." The Jews chose not to be the subjects of such a King, and declared, they "would not have this man to reign over them." Therefore the kingdom of God was taken from them, and given to a people bringing forth the fruits thereof. Be it our care, while we celebrate the advent of our King, not to forget this part of his character; and let us rest assured, that if we would be his subjects, as well as pass for such, and share the blessings of his reign, as well as talk of them, we must be like him. His subjects are his *children*; and none will be finally owned by him as such, who bear not impressed upon them the similitude of their *Father*.

\* Matt. xxvii. 19.

† Matt. xxvii. 4.

‡ Luke xxiii. 4.

§ Luke xxiii. 47.

Salvation is the next sign and token which Zechariah hath given us, whereby to know the King of Zion. "He is just, and having salvation." He was to execute that part of the regal office, which consisteth in rescuing a people from their oppressors. Whoever reads the history of Israel, finds it to contain an account of many saviours, raised up, at sundry times, for this purpose. Such were Moses, Barak, Gideon, Samson, and many more in the ages after them. But no one of these was "He that should come." They, like the legal priests, "were not suffered to continue, by reason of death;" the church was still taught to "look for another," and a more glorious Saviour, in the latter days; the prophecies were full of the great salvation which he should effect; so great, that, in comparison of it, former deliverances were not to be mentioned, unless as shadows and faint resemblances of that grand and complete one. At the time appointed, Jesus of Nazareth appeared in this character, and brought his credentials with him, the authenticity of which was fairly allowed by a master in Israel; "No man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God were with him." At the birth of Christ, an herald from heaven proclaimed him to the shepherds by this style and title.—"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a SAVIOUR." And if tidings of salvation are not tidings of joy, what tidings can be such? The greater the salvation, the greater ought to be the joy. And what is the deliverance of a single people from a temporal adversary, when compared with the salvation of the whole world from the oppression of the spiritual enemy; from sin, and sickness, and sorrow, and pain, and death, and hell? This was the salvation which Jesus undertook to effect; and his miracles declared him equal to the mighty task. He forgave sin, he healed sickness, he dispelled sorrow, he removed pain, he raised the dead, he cast out devils. Had not the prophet reason to cry out, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King, behold thy righteous Saviour cometh unto thee?" But the daughter of Zion would have shut her gates against this righteous Saviour; the daughter of Jerusalem renounced her part and portion in such salvation. She had set her heart upon being great in this



world, whereas Christ came to make her so in another. And whenever Christians shall resemble Jews in the turn of their affections, whenever they shall regard religion only as a means of aggrandizing themselves upon earth, in their hearts they will entertain the same notion of the salvation of Jesus, and the same contempt for it, that the Jews did. But let the sufferings of Jerusalem warn us, that we share not in her guilt, lest we share also in her punishment, and come into the same condemnation. We acknowledge for our Saviour the person whom Israel rejected. Let us not mistake the nature of his salvation. "He shall be called JESUS," saith the angel to his holy mother, "for he shall save his people from their SINS."\*

As the salvation to be wrought by King Messiah was to be so different from that wrought by all other kings and conquerors, different likewise was to be his appearance and demeanour. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding on an ass." This is demonstration against the Jews, that how great soever, in the end, the external glory of Messiah is to be (and neither they nor we can set that too high), yet he was once to visit his people in great humility; he was to appear, at his first advent, in a state of humiliation. The nature of his undertaking required it, and their own law and prophets are clear and express upon the subject. Though God, he was to become man; "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and they shall call his name IMMANUEL, which is, being interpreted, GOD WITH US."† He was to be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" a man without "form or comeliness,"‡ without the glare of outward splendour to recommend him; "his visage," on the contrary, by suffering affliction, was to be "marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."§ He was to keep the law, and to die for sin. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not—burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, lo I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart.¶ He made his soul an offering for sin; he was cut off out of the land of the living; he made his grave

\* Matt. i. 21.

† Isa. vii. 14. Matt. i. 23.

‡ Isa. liii.

§ Isa. lii. 14.

¶ Ps. xl. 7. Heb. x. 7.

with the rich.”\* If words can render any thing plain, it is plain from these passages, that Messiah was to be an humble and a suffering character. The types and the prophecies are as positive for his humiliation, as they are for his exaltation; nor could any one person accomplish them all, without being equally remarkable for lowliness and meekness, glory and honour. The modern Jews, sensible of this, have framed to themselves two Messiahs; one, Ben Joseph, of the tribe of Ephraim, designed to be poor and contemptible, and to undergo great indignities; the other, Ben David, of the tribe of Judah, who is to be victorious, to conquer all the earth before them, and to live for ever in temporal grandeur. This idle dream, contrary to the tenor of the whole Old Testament, and unknown to their expositors before Christ came, shows us, that blindness hath happened to Israel, not for want of light, but because they have shut their eyes against it, till they cannot now open them, to behold the brightness of its shining; to view Jesus of Nazareth, as the end of their law, and the accomplishment of their prophecies. To an unprejudiced person, acquainted with that law, and those prophecies, the sight of the lowly Jesus, entering Jerusalem in great humility, and in still greater, bowing his head and expiring on Mount Calvary, is a no less striking evidence of his being the Messiah, than his glorious resurrection from the dead, and triumphant ascension into heaven. The scriptures must needs be fulfilled, in one respect, as well as the other. Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and thus it behoved him to humble himself, in order to his suffering. Through pride Adam fell, and therefore by lowliness must Christ be exalted. “An haughty spirit goeth before a fall; but before honour is humility.”†

In this state of meekness and lowliness, was Christ to gain a complete victory over the enemies of man’s salvation. The warfare was new, and it is no wonder, that the weapons employed in it should be uncommon. Other warriors prepare their horses and their chariots, their bows, their spears, and their shields. But Messiah disarms his followers, in order that they may overcome. For thus our prophet goes on; “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off:

\* Isa. liii.

† Prov. xviii. 12.

and he shall speak peace unto the heathen." Could a plainer declaration have been made, that the conquests of Messiah were not to be of a secular nature; that his kingdom was not of this world? "If my kingdom were of this world," saith he himself, "then would my servants fight." \* But lo, he taketh from them the weapons of war. Was there a shield or sword seen among the thousands of the Israel of God? No shield, but that of faith; no sword, but that of the Spirit. Like their great leader, they encountered their adversaries with patience, and overcame by suffering. So far was the advent of Christ from carrying with it any appearance of war, that the nations at the time lay hushed in the tranquillity of an universal peace. "He spake peace to the heathen," as well as to his own people the Jews. The waves of this troublesome world ceased to toss themselves, and a delightful calm seemed to forebode the approach of those halcyon days, when the Prince of Peace should make his abode amongst us; like the stillness of that hallowed night, on which the angelic choir descended, to sing "Peace on earth;" peace with God, by the pardon of sin; peace with ourselves, by the answer of a clear conscience; peace with one another, by mutual charity. O divine peace, how lovely and how pleasant dost thou appear! How happy and heavenly is the kingdom of Messiah, where thou art to be found! Who would not wish to see, who would not labour to promote the full accomplishment of the last clause of the prophecy we have been considering, in the extension of this kingdom and dominion of Christ "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;" that so all the nations of the world might remember themselves, and turn to the Lord Jesus, as many did at the first preaching of his gospel. And let the daughter of Zion lead the way, restored to her pre-eminence among the churches. We will not envy her the honour, as she formerly envied us Gentiles, but rather rejoice and shout with her, in the day when she shall be led to acknowledge her King; the King of righteousness, salvation, and peace; the once lowly, but now highly exalted Jesus of Nazareth; who, as at this time, came to visit us in great humility, and shall come again at the appointed hour, to judge the world; when we shall behold him, glorious

\* John xviii. 36.

as Jerusalem herself can wish, riding upon the heavens in power and majesty unutterable, amidst the acclamations of saints and angels.

## DISCOURSE VI.

### THE KING OF GLORY.

*Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.—Rev. i. 7.*

It is the peculiar supputation of the Christian church, as a pious writer well observes, to begin the year, and to commence the annual course of her services, at this time of advent, herein differing from all other accounts of time whatsoever. The reason of which seems plainly to be this, because in the numbering her days, and measuring her seasons, she does not so much regard the sun in the firmament, as the great Sun of Righteousness, her Lord and Saviour, who is in heaven. She considers herself as “redeemed from the earth;” and therefore no longer confined to the calculations of the world, or obliged to direct herself by the courses of the material luminaries. It is her employment to make known to her children the time of salvation, called in scripture, “the year of the redeemed;” and this year was introduced by the everlasting dayspring from on high visiting her; whereby she became, what the Spirit styles her, in the revelation, “a city that has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the Lord God and the Lamb are the light and the glory thereof.”

The lessons and services therefore for the four first sundays in her liturgical year, propose to our meditations the twofold advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, teaching us that it is he who was to come, and did come, to redeem the world; and that it is he also, who shall come again to be our judge. These two advents involve in them, and comprehend between them, the whole counsel of God for the redemption of man-



kind, by the coming of Christ in the flesh, with the final issue of that counsel in respect of each individual, to be manifested at his coming to judgment.

The end proposed by the church, in setting these two appearances of Christ together before us, at this time, is, to beget in our minds proper dispositions to celebrate the one, and expect the other; that so, with joy and thankfulness, we may now "go to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us;" even the Son of God came to visit us in great humility; and thence, with faith unfeigned, and hope immovable, ascend in heart and mind to meet the same Son of God in the air, coming in glorious majesty to judge the quick and dead.

And certainly, if any thing can lead men to repentance, and turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of that just One, the wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus, it must be the united considerations of his mercy, and his justice: his infinite mercy during the day of grace, when all sins, that can be repented of, are forgiven unto men; his inexorable justice at the day of retribution, when he shall infallibly render unto every man according as his work shall be. And perhaps there is no better method of stirring up our wills to procure an interest, or of discovering the interest we already possess in the love of Christ, than by viewing in their proper colours the terrors of his judgment, as they will show themselves to the astonished world at that awful hour of his second advent; when the mask put upon false principles and evil actions shall drop off, and all things be estimated by the measures of Christianity, and the standard of the gospel of Jesus.

The words of the divine and well beloved John now read are, it is presumed, not improper for this purpose, as they evidently fall in with the design of our church at this season, and speak the same language with her advent services—"Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

In these words we may observe,

I. Christ's advent to judgment, with the manner of it; "Behold, he cometh with clouds."

II. The circumstance of the world's beholding him, and the effect it shall produce; "every eye shall see him, and they

also that pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

III. The faith and hope of the church, displayed by her wishing and praying for his manifestation, notwithstanding all the terrors that are to attend it; "Even so. Amen."

I. Then we are to consider Christ's advent to judgment. There is something wonderfully awful and affecting in the short description the text gives us of it. The beautiful manner, particularly, in which it is introduced, is worthy notice. St. John, having occasion to mention his dear Lord and Master, at whose command he wrote this epistle to the churches, fired and transported at the glorious name, runs on with amazing rapidity, enumerating the blessings of the redemption which is by him; and having carried him from his cross to his throne, and ascribed all glory to him sitting upon it, immediately he sees him in the clouds, and breaks forth in the words of the text. The whole passage runs thus, "John to the seven churches, which are in Asia: grace be unto you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth; unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.—Behold, he cometh!" It is evident likewise, at first sight, how well this sudden and abrupt introduction is calculated to awaken our attention to what follows.—"The corruptible body, alas, presseth down the soul that museth on many things," and especially when it museth on the things of eternity. Multitudes lie asleep in their sins, amused with delusive dreams; dead to their true views and interests, as a corpse sleeping in the dust, is dead to the views and interests of this life. Therefore the Holy Spirit, about to make proclamation of Christ's second advent, first sounds a trumpet in Sion, and an alarm in the holy mountain, and ushers it in with an emphatical—*Behold!* which, like the voice of that wakeful bird that gives the first notice of the approach of the morning, and as a prelude to the archangel's trump, which is to give notice of the approach of the last morning that shall ever rise upon the world, is designed to awaken a careless and indolent gene-

ration out of its lethargy, importing the same in this place, with those other frequent calls of the apostles and prophets—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Arise, shine, for thy light is coming, and the glory of the Lord is rising upon thee."

"Behold, he cometh!" And is not this a sight most worthy of our attention? Is it not very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should behold it? That we should open the eyes of our faith, which the bewitching cup of pleasure and vanity, mingled by a deceitful world for our destruction, has charmed to sleep? That we should "lift up our heads, and look up, to see our redemption drawing nigh." For draw nigh it will, and it does, whether we consider it or not. Every evening takes a day from the world's duration. The portion of the wicked is so much less, and the time of their punishment so much approached. The sufferings of the patient so much diminished, and their hopes of deliverance so much increased. Nay, every clock that strikes, bids us recollect, that the promise of Christ has then received an additional force;—"Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The precise day and hour knoweth no man. Though probably, as it was at his first advent, so likewise will it be at his second. The faithful servants, who are watching for the return of their Lord, and "looking for redemption in Jerusalem," will be able, by the books of the scriptures, and the signs of the times, to tell when the day is approaching. But what avails a curious disquisition upon the exact period of the world's dissolution? What is likely to be the fate of those malefactors, who, instead of preparing for their trial, spend the small portion of time allotted them, in disputing with each other concerning the hour in which the trumpet shall sound, and the judge make his entry? In this, above all other cases, "blessed is the man that feareth always. Blessed is that servant, who, whether his master cometh at the second watch, or whether he cometh at the third watch," is ready to receive him, and exhibit his accounts. Blessed, in short, is he, and he only, who hears continually these words of the beloved John;—"Behold, he cometh."

He cometh, indeed! But how changed! How different his appearance, from what it once was! How shall we be able

to conceive of it as it deserves, to raise our thoughts from the voice of the tender babe in the manger, bewailing our sins that brought him thither, to the voice of the Son of God, from which the heavens and the earth shall fly away, and no place be found for them any more for ever! Yet so it is. Behold, he who came in swaddling clothes, cometh with clouds. He who came to preach the day of salvation, cometh again to proclaim the day of vengeance. He who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, leads his ten thousands to the prey, as the lion of the tribe of Judah. He who cried not, nor lifted up his voice against his enemies upon earth, thunders with the glorious voice of his excellency against them from heaven. He who never brake a bruised reed, rules the nations with a rod of iron, and breaks them in pieces like a potter's vessel. He who quenched not the smoking flax, extinguishes the great lights of the world; darkens the sun, and turns the moon into blood; commands the stars from their stations, and the dead from their graves; shakes the powers of heaven, and the foundations of the earth, and all hearts that are not fixed on him.

The trumpet sounds, and he is coming! The everlasting gates of heaven, which lifted up their heads for the King of Glory to enter in, are again lifted up; and behold the procession that comes forth of them, descending to this lower world, as it is described by one who saw it in vision.—“I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true,” the accomplisher of all his promises; “and in righteousness he doth judge” the world, “and make war” against all that oppose him. “His eyes were as a flame of fire,” discerning and destroying the counsels of his adversaries; “and on his head were many crowns;” all the kingdoms of this world were become his; “and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself,” the ineffable name of the divine essence. “And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood,” the garment of vengeance. “And his name,” by which he is known to men, “is called, THE WORD OF GOD. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses,” attending him in his glory, “clothed in fine linen, white and clean,” which is the righteousness of saints. “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword,” namely, his holy word, “that with it he should smite the nations. And he shall rule them,” that



have rejected the golden sceptre of mercy, "with a rod of iron. And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

When Joshua, at the head of the armies of Israel, surrounded Jericho, at the sound of the trumpet, the walls fell flat. When the divine Joshua, at the head of the armies of the true Israel of God, the church triumphant, surrounds this city of destruction, can the event be otherwise? Assuredly it cannot. The strength, beauty, and glory of the world will fall, and come to nothing, at the moment when the trumpet, sounding from the one end of heaven to the other, shall give notice, that the judge of all the earth is coming to his judgment seat in the air. The throne that shall be there erected for him is thus described by Daniel—"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the ancient of days did sit; whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire; a fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The judgment was set, and the books were opened." In the clouds over our heads is this judgment seat to be formed, as it is also written in the book of Psalms.—"Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." From amidst this thick darkness the lightnings, those swift executioners of divine vengeance, shall flash abroad over the earth, while ten thousand thunders, rolling forth from the glorious God that maketh them, shall at once utter their tremendous voices: as it is written again in the same book of Psalms—"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence," as once, when like a sheep dumb before his shearers, he opened not his mouth. "A fire shall now devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. The Lord," even the Lord Jesus, "shall thunder out of heaven, and the highest give his thunder, hail stones and coals of fire." By the brightness of his coming all enemies shall soon be consumed, all clouds shall pass away; and the Judge shall appear upon his radiant throne, like his emblem the sun; so that there shall not be a tongue but must own with the church in her triumphant song, "Heaven and

earth are full of the majesty of thy glory." And as Christ upon his throne, like the sun, will see all, so, like the sun, he will be seen of all, which brings us to the—

IId. Thing to be considered, namely, The circumstance of mankind beholding him, with the effect it shall produce upon them; "Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

The Judge being seated on his throne, and all things subdued to him, "before him shall be gathered all nations," all the invulnerable multitudes of men and women, that have lived in every age, and every country. Every eye shall see the God that made it, and commanded it to be pure, and single. How it has fulfilled his commandment, will then be known. The sight of Christ upon his throne will be a trying sight: the effects of it will enter the heart like the piercings of a sword, and reveal all its thoughts in the countenance; hypocrisy shall then be no more. "Every eye shall see him." But who shall be able to endure the sight? Even "they that pierced him" must "look on him whom they pierced." Pilate will behold the poor, despised Galilean, whom he scourged, and delivered to be crucified, now ready to judge him, and all the world. Herod and his men of war, who mocked and set him at nought, will see him encompassed with ten thousands of saints and angels, about to speak unto them in his wrath, and trouble them in his sore displeasure. A corrupt temporizing Sanhedrim, who were instant with loud voices that he might be crucified, will see heaven and earth fly away from before the face of that Priest, of whom they, his representatives, were the betrayers and murderers. They who platted and put on the crown of thorns, shall be struck blind with rays of glory beaming from his sacred head. And they who drove the nails, and he who thrust the spear into his side, shall see that same Jesus, whom they pierced, exalted above every name that is named in heaven and earth.

But think not that the Jews, who crucified Christ, are the only persons that will have reason to tremble at this sight. There are others, who may dread it, as well as they. Those, whose sins, yet unrepented of, sharpened the nails, and pointed every thorn. Those careless ones, who are at ease; whose hearts, harder than the rocks, that rent asunder at his crucifixion, remain unmoved at the

sight of the Son of God, dying upon the cross for them, and calling from thence to a thoughtless world—"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."

Bishop Taylor, in one of his advent sermons, has an expostulation with a sinner upon this subject, which is so just, beautiful, and affecting, and so infinitely beyond any thing I can offer, that I shall not only have your pardon, but your thanks, for reciting it.—"It was for thy sake that the Judge did suffer unspeakable pains, such as were sufficient to reconcile all the world to God. And to consider that thou hast, for thy own particular, made all this in vain and ineffective; that Christ, thy Lord and Judge, should be tormented for nothing; that thou wouldest not accept felicity and pardon, when he purchased them at so dear a price: it must needs be an infinite condemnation to thee. How shalt thou look upon him that fainted and died for love of thee, and thou didst scorn his miraculous mercies? How shalt thou dare to behold that holy face which brought salvation to thee, and thou didst turn away, and fall in love with death, and deformity, and sin? And yet, in the beholding that face, consists much of the glories of eternity. Surely all the pains and the passions, the sorrows and the groans, the humility and poverty, the labours and the watchings, the prayers and the sermons, the miracles and the prophecies, the whip and the nails, the death and the burial, the shame and the smart, the cross and the grave of Jesus, shall be laid upon thy score, if thou hast refused the mercies and design of all their holy ends and purposes. And if thou rememberest what a calamity that was, which broke the Jewish nation in pieces, when Christ came to judge them, for their murdering him, who was their king, and the prince of life; and considerest, that this was but a dark image of the terrors of the day of judgment, thou mayest then apprehend, that there is some strange unspeakable evil in store for one who refuses the salvation of Jesus, and rather chooses that Satan should rejoice in his destruction, than that Jesus should triumph in his felicity."

Thus far this excellent prelate. And all who consider the matter in this its true and proper light, cannot wonder

at the effect which, as St. John in the text tells us, the sight of Christ will produce among the kindreds of the earth. They shall wail because of Christ, when they see him whom they have pierced by their sins, and crucified afresh. And that wailing must needs be terrible, when millions of men and women shall, at the same instant, fearfully cry out, and the noise shall mingle with the trumpet of the archangel, and the thunders of the dying and groaning heavens passing away with a great noise, and the roaring of the flames in which the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall then be dissolving. The terror and lamentation throughout the world at that time, with the foreboding pangs and convulsions of departing nature, will be such as never were, since the day that God created man upon the earth. Include in your idea the destruction of the old world by the flood, the overthrow of the cities of the plain by fire and brimstone, and the desolation of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, with an assemblage of the plagues of Egypt, and the miseries and calamities felt by men in all ages, yet your conceptions will fall as far short of the things themselves, as the shadow does of the substance. Nothing can exceed our blessed Lord's description of this last scene, but its actual accomplishment—"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." At this most awful and tremendous hour, when the Son of man shall display his banner, the cross, in the clouds; when the sea and the waters of the great deep shall roar; when the destroying angel shall again go forth at midnight into the land of Egypt, and there shall be a great cry throughout all the land, because of death and judgment; then shall be brought to pass that which is written in the Revelation;—"I beheld when the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in



the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

A view of the terrors of the Lord has by this time, perhaps, made us all ready to join in asking this last question; "Who shall be able to stand?" And we cannot help taking up our parable with Balaam; "Alas! who shall live, when God doth this?" But, thanks be to God, an answer will be abundantly ministered unto us by a consideration of the—

III. And last point proposed, namely, the faith and hope of the church, who wishes for Christ's manifestation, notwithstanding all the terrors that are to attend it, as appears by the remaining words of my text—"Even so. Amen."

For these are not the words of St. John only, but they carry in them the prayers and sighs of Christians, sent up to the throne of grace through him. It is not "the Spirit" alone, speaking by him, that says, "Come," but "the bride," or church, also says the same. "How long, O Lord, holy and true," is the voice of the departed spirits, resting from their labours under the altar in heaven, and waiting for the completion of their glory, at the day of their Redeemer's triumph. And that part of the church which is still militant, and sojourns in the wilderness, may be heard earnestly joining in the same expostulation, in the 64th chapter of the prophet Isaiah; "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence. When formerly thou didst terrible things, which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence." Nay, we ourselves, every one of us, daily put up the very same petition to God, when we pray that "his kingdom may come;" for his kingdom of glory cannot come, till all these things shall have been brought to pass. And again, when, standing at the grave's mouth, we have before our eyes a plain proof, that "man, who is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live" in this world; we earnestly

beseech the Father of spirits, "that it would please him of his gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of his elect, and to hasten his kingdom." Thus the coming of that day, in which "all the kindreds of the earth shall wail," is the constant subject of the wishes and prayers of the sons of God. A sound Christian faith gives them confidence toward God, and teaches them, without hypocrisy, to pray for the second advent of Christ. For although in that day "he cometh with clouds," yet God's promise is, that whenever "he brings his cloud" over the earth, his "bow shall be in the cloud," the sure token of the "everlasting covenant of mercy between him and all flesh." And, accordingly, when Ezekiel and St. John saw Christ upon his terrible throne, he appeared encompassed with a RAINBOW, to teach us, that even the throne of judgment is encircled by mercy, which rejoices against judgment. All the cries of despairing nations, the thunders of heaven, and the horrible noises of the perishing earth shall not keep those who have been indeed the disciples of Jesus, from hearing a voice saying unto them, "Come up hither." Yea, and they who in faith and patience have waited for the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah speaks, "shall then renew their strength, they shall mount up as eagles." They shall ascend to meet their Redeemer in the air, and the eye of faith shall stedfastly behold the glories of the Sun of Righteousness. Marvel no longer then that the church so passionately desires the manifestation of Christ. Marvel not that she should say, COME! when the advent of him to whom she speaks is to be the day of her espousals, and the day of the gladness of her heart; the end of her Saviour's sufferings, and her faith; a day of triumph, and everlasting felicity. Let the men of the world lament, for their joy is ended, and their sorrows beginning; but let the redeemed be glad, for their sorrows are at an end, and their joys beginning. Let the "tribes of the earth mourn," but "let Israel rejoice in him that made him, and let the children of Sion be joyful in their King." For the trumpet which proclaims the destruction of the ungodly, declares at the same time the salvation of the righteous. When that trumpet sounds throughout the land, the eternal *jubilee* is begun. There is liberty for the captives, and the opening of the prison doors, even the gates of the grave, for those

to come out, who lie there in darkness, and in the shadow of death; and every child of God is free to return to his possession and inheritance, and to the family of his heavenly Father. When they who have loved the world, instead of him whom the world crucified, and trusted in the false glory and riches of earthly Babylon, shall "stand weeping and wailing, to see the smoke of her burning, saying,—Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in purple, and fine linen, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones; how in one hour is so great riches come to nought?"—What saith the Spirit to the church? "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." And what saith the church herself? "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

And now, my brethren, whose heart does not burn within him, when he hears the melody of the celestial choir chanting forth the praises of their victorious Redeemer round his glorious throne? Is there a single person here, whose soul has not a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord, and to bear his part in the never-ending chorus? But know, O man, whosoever thou art, that hast this desire and longing, know thou must be a penitent upon earth, before thou canst be a saint in heaven. Thou must be holy in time, if thou wouldst be glorious in eternity. Acquaint now, therefore, thyself with God, and be at peace with him, thyself, and all mankind; thereby, and thereby only, shall good come unto thee at thy latter end. Stop not thine ears, and harden not thine heart against instruction, when it is the day of trial and probation in the wilderness. Receive now, I pray thee, the law of the Most High; retire, and meditate upon it, and lay up his words in thy heart; nor suffer the world to rob thee of that wisdom which is more precious than rubies, and to which all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared. Fear not, neither be dismayed, because of the multitude of thy past transgressions, which present themselves to thy troubled conscience, and set themselves in array against thee. God

can forgive, if thou canst repent. Nay, he will “give thee repentance unto life,” if thou wilt request it of him. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt yet be built up, and, impossible as it may appear, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle: thou shalt cease to do evil, and learn to do good. thou shalt cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life: thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and lift up thy face unto God: thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; he shall not lay thy sins to thy charge, but forgive thee what is past, and give thee grace to amend thy sinful life; to decline from the ways of the destroyer, in which, perhaps, thou hast unhappily wandered, and incline to the paths of wisdom and righteousness, and walk therein before him all the days of thy life. And when the work shall be finished, for which God sent thee into the world, even the work of thy salvation, thou wilt perceive, that to depart and to be with Christ is far better than to live here in possession of all that the world can give thee. Thou shalt go out with joy, and be led forth with peace by angels, who shall convey and welcome thy spirit to the regions of the living, to the bosoms of our holy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whence sorrow, grief, and lamentation, are banished away, where the light of God’s countenance visits and shines continually. And when the trumpet shall sound, and all the tribes and kindreds of the earth shall wail, thou shalt lift up thy voice and sing for the majesty and glory of thy triumphant Lord, and call to the heavens and the earth to bear thee company—“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea make a noise, and all that is therein; let the field be joyful, and all that is in it; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord; for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth, and with righteousness to judge the world, and the people with his truth. He which testifieth these things, saith,—Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

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## DISCOURSE VII.

## THE WORD INCARNATE.

*The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.—John i. 14.*

IN contemplating the character of man's Redeemer, it is hard to say, whether our admiration be most excited by the natural dignity, or the voluntary abasement of his person. To form suitable ideas of either, it is expedient to take a view of both. And they appear to the utmost advantage in the exordium of St. John's gospel, where he setteth himself to publish, first, the divinity, and then the incarnation of his most adorable and beloved Master. He mentions in due order, and regular gradation, the glory which the word had with the Father, before man, or the world which he now inhabits, had a being; "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God"—His glory, with respect to the creatures, the works of his hands; "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made"—His glory, as the sole Author of life and immortality; "In him was life, and the life was the light of men"—His glory, with respect to man in general, as fallen into a state of ignorance and sensuality; "And the light shined in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not"—His glory, with respect to the Jews, to whom he first manifested himself; "He came unto his own, and his own received him not"—His glory, with respect to Christians; "To as many as believed on him gave he power to become the sons of God;" in order to effect which, he himself became the Son of man; "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Can any thing be more truly noble and sublime than the

former part of the evangelist's discourse, more pleasing and acceptable than the latter, descending from the loftiest of speculations on the divine nature of the word, to display the benefits of his advent in the flesh; like the Nile, when, rolling from the heights of the Nubian mountains, it diffuseth riches and plenteousness over all the land of Egypt.

The union of two natures in the person of our Lord, which may justly be considered as the source of every blessing we enjoy in time, or hope to enjoy in eternity, is expressed by St. John, in these terms,—“The word was made flesh,”\* each of which will be found worthy our attention.

The term *Word* (*λογος*) was in use among the ancient philosophers, who sometimes speak of a person under that appellation, as the maker of the universe. So Tertullian informs the Gentiles.† And Eusebius, in the 11th book of his *Evangelical Preparation*, cites a passage from Amelius, a celebrated admirer and imitator of Plato, in which he speaks of the *λογος* as being eternal, and the maker of all things. This, he says, was the opinion of Heraclitus; and then introduces the beginning of the gospel of St. John; concerning whom, it seems, he was wont to complain, that he had transferred into his book the sentiments of his master, Plato.

But it is not likely that our evangelist either borrowed from, or intended to copy after Plato. And since, not only Plato, but Pythagoras and Zeno likewise, conversed with the Jews, it is not at all wonderful, that we meet with something about a *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ*, or *DIVINE WORD*, in their writings. Nor, after all, might the philosopher and the apostle use the same term in the same acceptance.

It is customary with the writers of the New Testament to express themselves, as much as may be, in the language of the Old, to which, therefore, we must have recourse for an explanation of their meaning, as the penmen of both, under the direction of one Spirit, used their terms in the same sense.

Now, upon looking into the Old Testament, we find, that “the word of Jehovah,”‡ is frequently and evidently the

\* Ο λογος σαρχος εγενετο.

† “Apud vestros quoque sapientes *λογον*, id est Sermonem atque Rationem, constat artificem videri universitatis. Hunc enim Zeno determinat factitorem, qui cuncta in dispositione formaverit.”

‡ דבר יהוה.

style of a *person*, who is said “to come, to be revealed, or manifested,” and the like. As in the 15th chapter of Genesis;—“After these things, the word of Jehovah came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abraham; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abraham said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me,” &c.—“Behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir—and HE brought him forth abroad,” &c. Thus again, 1 Sam. iii. “Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah.” The same person is, at other times, characterized by the title, “the name of Jehovah,”\* as in Isaiah xxx. 27.—“Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from far, burning with his anger,” &c.

With regard to the nature of the person thus denominated, whoever shall duly consider the attributes, powers, and actions ascribed to him, will see reason to think of him not as of a created intelligence, but a person of the divine essence, possessed of all its incommunicable properties. And it may be noticed, that the Targums, or Chaldee paraphrasts, continually substitute *the Word of Jehovah*,† for *Jehovah*,‡ ascribing divine characters to the person so named. And the ancient *grecizing* Jews speak in the same style. Thus in that excellent apocryphal book of Wisdom, ix. 1.—“O God, who hast made all things *εν ΛΟΓΩ σου* by thy Word:” and again, in the passage, which so wonderfully describes the horrors of that night, never to be forgotten by an Israelite, wherein the first born of the Egyptians were slain—“While all things were in quiet silence, and that night was in the midst of her swift course, thine almighty Word (*ΛΟΓΟΣ*) leaped down from heaven, out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction; and brought thine unfeigned commandment, as a sharp sword; and standing up, filled all things with death; and it touched the heaven, but it stood upon the earth.”—Chap. xviii. 14.

But whatever may be thought of these passages, certain it is, that when St. John comes to treat of this WORD, although, to show a distinction of personality, he first tells us, “The Word was with God;” yet, to prevent all mistakes on the other side of the question, he instantly adds, “And the Word was God;” thus evidently asserting an unity of essence.

And let any impartial man only lay together, upon this

\* שם יהוה.

† מימרא דיי.

‡ יהוה.

subject, and duly weigh the few following particulars; that St. John tells us, "The Word was God," and "The Word was made flesh;" that St. Paul says, "God was manifest in the flesh; God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; and in him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" that our Saviour is styled **JEHOVAH**, a name appropriated to deity; that he says of himself, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last"—I am he that searcheth the hearts and reins;" that he created the world by his power, redeemed it by his mercy, governs it by his providence, and shall judge it in righteousness; let any impartial man, I say, consider these things with the attention they deserve, and determine for himself, concerning the nature and dignity of him, who was incarnate for our salvation.

Should it be asked, why this person is styled, **WORD**? The proper answer seems to be, that as a thought, or conception of the understanding, is brought forth and communicated in *speech*, or *discourse*, so is the divine will made known by the **WORD**, who is the offspring and emanation of the eternal mind; an emanation pure and undivided, like that of light, which is the proper issue of the sun, and yet coeval with its parent orb; since the sun cannot be supposed, by the most exact and philosophical imagination, to exist a moment, without emitting light; and were the one eternal, the other, though strictly and properly produced by it, would be as strictly and properly coeternal with it. So true is the assertion of the Nicene fathers; so apt the instance subjoined for its illustration; "God of God, light of light:" in apostolical language, "The brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person."† And whether we consider our Lord under the idea of the **WORD**, or that of **LIGHT**, it will lead us to the same conclusion respecting his office. For as no man can discover the mind of another, but by the word which pro-

\* Upon this passage, which is found Rev. i. 11, Dr. Doddridge has the following note:—"That these titles (which occur just above in ver. 8.) should be repeated so soon, in a connexion which demonstrates they are given to Christ, will appear very remarkable, whatever sense be given to the eighth verse. The argument drawn in the preceding note upon it, would have been strong, wherever such a passage as this had been found; but its immediate connexion with this greatly strengthens it. And I cannot forbear recording it, that this text has done more than any other in the Bible, toward preventing me from giving into that scheme, which would make our Lord Jesus Christ no more than a deified creature."

† Απαυγασμα της δοξης, και χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως.



ceedeth from him; as no man can see the sun, but by the light which itself emitteth; even so, "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and him to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."<sup>\*</sup>

This glorious WORD, this uncreated LIGHT, was united to our nature in the person of Christ;—"The Word was made *flesh*." *Flesh*, which is a part of our nature, stands here for the whole; and being the baser part of the composition, seems purposely mentioned, to intimate, that the care and love of heaven extend even to that; that our bodies, no less than our spirits, are included in the scheme of redemption; so that while the soul reposeth, in humble confidence, on the mercies of Jesus, the *flesh* also may "rest in hope." In *flesh*, and by the instigation of *flesh*, the offence was committed. By taking *flesh* upon him, therefore, the great Physician, the sovereign healer of all our maladies, corrected the bad qualities of the fountain, that the streams might flow pure and salutary. In *flesh* the offence was committed, and therefore in *flesh* satisfaction must be made for it. Our High Priest was incarnate, that he might have something to offer, more valuable and efficacious than the *flesh* of bulls and calves.—"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure; then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God."<sup>†</sup> The nature that sinned, according to the rules of justice, was to suffer for sin; and the Word was made *flesh* for the same reason, that, when so made, he was baptized by John, "To fulfil all righteousness." "And as Christ took manhood, that by it he might be capable of death, whereunto he humbled himself; so, because manhood is the proper subject of compassion and feeling pity, which maketh the sceptre of Christ's regency, even in the kingdom of heaven, to be amiable; he who, without our nature, could not on earth suffer for the sins of the world: doth now also, by means thereof, both make intercession to God for sinners, and exercise dominion over all men, with a true, a natural, and a sensible touch of pity."<sup>‡</sup>

As the Divinity is an object by no means within the grasp of the human understanding, it were absurd to expect an adequate idea of the mode of its union with *flesh*, expressed

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xi. 27.

<sup>†</sup> Ps. xl. 6. Heb. x. 5.

<sup>‡</sup> Hooker, Ecclesiast. Polity, v. 51.

in the text by the word “made;” \*—“The Word was *made* flesh.” It sufficeth, in this case, to maintain the general truth of the proposition against those, who, in different ways, by subtlety and sophistry, have laboured to oppugn and destroy it. We must not, with Arius, deny the Saviour to be truly God, because he became man; nor assert, with Apollinarius, that he was not really man, because he was also God. We must not, with Nestorius, rend Christ asunder, and divide him into two persons; nor, after the example of Eutyches, confound in his person those natures which should be distinguished. These were the four capital errors, which, in the earlier ages, harrassed and distracted the Christian church, on the point of the incarnation; and in opposition to which, the four most famous ancient general councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, were called. Whatever was by them decreed, either in declaration of Christian belief, or refutation of heresy, may all be comprized, as judicious Hooker well noteth, in four words, “truly, perfectly, indivisibly, distinctly;” † truly God, perfectly man, indivisibly one person, distinctly two natures. “Within the compass of which four heads, saith he, I may truly affirm, that all heresies, which touch the person of Jesus Christ (whether they have risen in these latter days, or in any age heretofore), may be with great facility brought to confine themselves.” ‡

The apostle to the Hebrews, writing on the subject of the incarnation, thus expresseth himself,—“He taketh not hold of angels, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham;” § he took, or assumed the manhood into God. As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ. The soul is not turned into, nor compounded with the body; yet they two, though distinct in nature, form one man. The natures are preserved, without confusion; the person is entire, without division. ||

Thus, then, as the necessity of the case, and the counsels of the Most High required, “The Word was made flesh;” and, being made flesh, “dwelt amongst us;” not appearing occasionally, as in ancient times, but making his abode with his

\* Εγένετο. † Αληθως, τελῶς, αδιαίρετως, ασυνχυτως. ‡ Book v. Sect. 54.

§ Ου γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται.

|| Sic factum est Caro, ut maneret Verbum; non immutando quod erat, sed assumendo quod non erat; nostra auxit, sua non minuit; nec sacramentum pietatis detrimentum Deitatis.—*Concil. Chalced.*

creatures; "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and delighting to be with the sons of men;" insomuch that we read of those, who were not afraid to ask him, "Master, where dwellest thou?" and received this gracious answer, "Come and see." "He pitched his tent among us,"\* a stranger and a sojourner, as his fathers were, concerning whom it is the apostle's observation, that, though the heirs of the promise, they lived in tents, shifting from place to place, and declaring, that here on earth they had no permanent city, but looked for one to come. The fleshly tabernacle, in which he resided, at the close of his pilgrimage, was to be taken down, in order afterward to be re-erected in a more glorious manner, and for ever fixed at the right hand of God; like the GLORY of old, which first travelled with Israel through the wilderness in a moveable tent, and then, at length, rested in a durable temple, on the hill of Sion. As the Captain of our salvation, the Leader of the Israel of God, he preceded his people to the battle against their spiritual enemies; and now, as King of Glory, crowned with victory and honour, he is seated on his throne, holding forth rewards to all his faithful soldiers and servants, which they are to receive at his hands, when the days of their pilgrimage and warfare shall be ended.

But let us not imagine, that, even in the state of humiliation, his glory was altogether obscured by the veil within which it dwelt; or that its frequent irradiations were not sufficient to convince those who beheld the house, how illustrious a guest it had the honour to contain. Eyewitnesses have given a different account. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." The sun was covered with a cloud; but it was the sun still; and often manifested, through the cloud, the power and brightness of its beams.

That Christ was man, the labours and the sorrows, the stripes, the wounds, the pains, and the death, which, as man, he suffered, did fully attest. But they who saw the most boisterous elements in nature cease from raging, and compose themselves into a perfect calm, when he said, "Peace, be still;" they who saw a foul and inveterate leprosy done away in a moment, by the words, "Be clean;" they who saw a body, that had been four days dead, arise from its tomb, when he called, "Lazarus, come forth:" these might well ask,

\* ΕΣΚΗΝΩΣΕΝ ΕΝ ΗΜΑΣ.

“What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea,” disease, and death itself, “obey him?” Outwardly indeed he appears to be a man; but surely, under that form, a celestial visitant is come among us. Is not this the Lord of nature? Is not this man’s Almighty Redeemer?

When, at the marriage in Cana, he had caused water to change its nature and properties, and to become wine, it is said, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and *manifested forth his glory*; and his disciples believed on him.”

But our evangelist saw more. He was one of those, who attended their Master on the mount of transfiguration, and to whom was vouchsafed a glimpse of that excellent glory, which the WORD “had with the Father before the world was,” and with which the humanity, by him assumed, is now for ever invested. The Divinity, enshrined within, communicated its radiance outwardly to the body, and even to the garments, till mortality seemed to be swallowed up of life; “His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” The “Lord our God became exceeding glorious, he was clothed with majesty and honour, he decked himself with light as it were with a garment.”

And, if we reflect upon the manner in which it pleased the Father to exalt and ennoble the most abasing circumstances of his life and death, by the choir of angels that descended to celebrate his birth; the new star which appeared in the skies, guiding the eastern sages to Bethlehem; the voice which answered him from heaven, in the audience of the Jews; the preternatural eclipse of the sun at his crucifixion; recollecting, at the same time, the triumph of his resurrection, and the manner of his ascension in the presence of his disciples; all these particulars conspire to declare the glory not of a servant, as Moses, but of a Son, of “the only begotten;” a glory not of magnificence only, or one beset with terrors, like that at Sinai, but bearing toward man, in every instance, a benign and most friendly aspect; as the same bright luminary, which rises in glorious majesty upon the earth, gives life, health, and gladness to all its inhabitants.—“We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

In a subsequent verse of this chapter, we find “grace and truth” set in opposition to the Mosaic law, “The law



was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law was the dispensation of justice, austere, rigorous, inflexible.—"He that doeth these things, shall live in them;" and "Cursed is he that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." The gospel is the dispensation of mercy, mild, gracious, forgiving, saying to the unhappy transgressor of the law, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." The law could only make sin known, and, by consequence, aggravate its guilt; the gospel can pardon sin, and abolish its guilt. Such is the contrast between the moral law and "grace." The ceremonial stands opposed to "truth," not as being *false*, but *figurative*. "The law had a shadow of good things to come; but the body," the substance, the reality, the truth, pointed at, and delineated by such a shadowy representation, "is of Christ." The blood of bulls and goats, for instance, was offered, but it could not take away sin; it was never intended so to do; it was "a figure for the time then present," designed to direct the faith of the offerer to its correspondent truth, namely, the blood of Messiah, to be afterward shed for that purpose. In itself, the law was ineffectual, and, of course, if rested in, proved fallacious and destructive.

But the words, as they stand in the text, may be taken in a more extended sense, comprehending the whole world, which, at the time of Christ's advent, was in a state of *error* and *condemnation*. The two blessings, therefore, of which it stood most eminently in need, were, "grace and truth;" grace to deliver it from condemnation, and truth to correct its errors. Both these God by Christ did vouchsafe to bestow upon it. "He hath made us accepted\* in the Beloved," remitting our sins, and receiving us to favour. He hath also shown us the true and the right way, enabling as well as directing us to walk therein. Grace, without truth, can only mock us; truth, without grace, can only affright us. But when grace hath brought us to him, truth will keep us with him: and through grace we shall accomplish what truth requireth at our hands.—"Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."†

\* ΕΧΑΡΙΣΤΩΣΕΝ ΗΜΑΣ, Eph. i. 6.

† Ps. lxxxv. 9, 10.

With wonder, gratitude, and joy, therefore, let us reflect upon the honour done us by the WORD being MADE FLESH. Our nature is exalted to the throne of God; there is a MAN in heaven! The disciples beheld Christ's glory in the days of his humiliation; but eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory with which God hath now invested "that body which it hath pleased him to make his own; that body wherewith he hath saved the world; that body which hath been and is the root of eternal life, the instrument wherewith Deity worketh, the sacrifice which taketh away sin, the price which hath ransomed souls from death, the leader of the whole army of bodies that shall rise again. For though it had a beginning from us, yet God hath given it vital efficacy, heaven hath endowed it with celestial power, that virtue which it hath from above, in regard whereof, all the angels in heaven adore it."\*

And if "no man ever yet hated his own flesh," can God hate the flesh, which, by being taken into one person with the WORD, is united to the godhead? Can the Father hate Him, of whom he more than once declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?" "And we are members of HIS body, of HIS flesh, and of HIS bones. It is a great mystery," saith the apostle, "but I speak concerning Christ and the church."†

When man had offended, he fled from his Maker, and dared no more to approach the divine presence. But now that the WORD incarnate hath published his general invitation—"O thou that hearest the prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come!"

If the Son of God became the Son of man, why should it seem a thing incredible, that the sons of men should become the sons of God?—"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory; for we shall see him as he is."‡

Delight we, then, to talk (and, since the incarnation of the WORD, why should we not delight to talk) of the dignity of human nature? Let us be careful to act up to it. To a Christian the advice of the philosopher comes with re-

\* Hooker, Book v. Sect. 54.

† Eph. v. 30.

‡ 1 John iii. 2.

doubled force ; “ Reverence yourself.”—Consider to whom you are related, by whom you have been begotten again to a lively hope of an unfading inheritance. The stock, from which you are sprung, is noble, it is royal, it is divine. Disgrace it not by base and unworthy actions. Your inheritance is with the saints in light ; have no fellowship with the works of darkness. Let your education be suitable to your birth, your conduct answerable to your expectations. The infirmities and dishonours, to which mortality is, and must be subject, need not discompose and afflict you. Be not dismayed at the approach of pain and sickness ; let not the coffin and the shroud terrify you. For though “ all flesh be as grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of grass ;” though “ the grass withereth, the flower fadeth,” kindly admonishing you to prepare for an autumn and a winter, when the spring of youth and the summer of manhood shall be passed and gone ; yet “ the WORD of God abideth for ever.” And this is the WORD which hath been “ made flesh, and dwelt among us ;” this is the WORD to which your nature is in Christ united ; “ this is the WORD, which, by the gospel, is preached unto you ;” whose glory there displayed, “ as the glory of the only begotten of the Father,” you may now behold ; and who, by his “ grace” preceding, and his “ truth” accompanying, will lead you to a glory, the excellence of which enjoyment only can enable you to comprehend.

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## DISCOURSE VIII.

THE CASE OF THE JEWS.

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*His own received him not.*—John i. 11.

THAT the eternal Son of God should condescend, in human form, to visit his people, as their Saviour and Redeemer, is an event which may well be allowed to excite our admiration. But how does our astonishment rise when

we are informed, that his people refused to receive so gracious a visitant?

The unbeliever, who is continually prying into every corner of ancient and modern history, for arguments to countenance him in his unbelief, seizes, we may be sure, with avidity, on this prominent and marvellous circumstance, and labours to make his advantage of it; affecting to conclude, that the incredulity of the Jew can only be accounted for, by supposing a deficiency in the evidence laid before him. And the believer, though satisfied that the mission of Jesus stands incontestably proved, will yet often find himself perplexed, when he reflecteth, how strange an occurrence it is, that a people, selected from all others to be the *peculium* of the Most High; by his mighty hand and stretched out arm rescued from bondage; conducted through all kinds of difficulties and dangers; at length settled in a country destined for their habitation; and there constituted the depositaries and guardians of the divine oracles and institutions; that this people should reject and crucify the person all along foretold, as we say, by those oracles, and pointed out by those institutions.

The truth is, that in all the annals of mankind, and in the whole compass of speculation, we meet not with a subject of so very singular and extraordinary a nature, as that now before us, namely, the case of the Jews. It may be added, that there is none, on every account, more deserving the deep and attentive consideration of Christians. Let us, therefore, inquire into the cause of the phenomenon, with which they present us. Let us hear their plea, and examine the grounds and reasons on which it is founded.

They did not, because they could not, deny, that the Son of Mary wrought miracles; miracles, though differing in kind, yet equal in number and magnitude to those performed by their own great lawgiver. Why then, believing Moses, did they not believe him? What was it that could occasion their infidelity? That which occasions it at all times, and in all places, when proper evidence is offered and rejected—The adoption of certain prejudices and prepossessions, as first principles, in opposition to which no evidence is to be admitted. Four points were by them taken for granted, from which flowed all their reasonings and all their proceedings.



The points were these :

*First.* That, as the chosen seed of Abraham, they had an exclusive indefeasible right to the favours of heaven.

*Secondly.* That the law of Moses, on account of its own intrinsic efficacy, and without a view to any thing farther, was ordained for perpetual observance.

*Thirdly.* That the possession of their city, temple, and country, in peace, wealth, and prosperity, was the end of the promises.

*Fourthly.* That the prophecies warranted them in the expectation of a Messiah, who, as a temporal prince, should secure them in such possession, by subduing their civil enemies, and reigning over them in Judea.

If these things were so, they had much, indeed, to say for themselves. But let us see whether there be not, in their own scriptures, evidence sufficient to set these positions aside, and to condemn those men, who, upon the strength of them, rejected and crucified Jesus of Nazareth.

Their *first* position was, that, as the chosen seed of Abraham, they had an exclusive and indefeasible right to the favours of heaven.

For thus, in reading the gospel history, we find them continually priding themselves in their descent from Abraham; as if, in order to their acceptance with God, nothing were required but a proof of their relation to that patriarch; and as if, while that relation subsisted, no misconduct of their own could occasion them, as a nation, to forfeit such acceptance. When our Lord spake to them concerning that liberty wherewith he came to make them free, they, mistaking spiritual for civil liberty, confidently and roundly replied, “We are Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man;”<sup>\*</sup> unaccountably forgetting, as it should seem, what they had formerly suffered in Egypt and Babylon, and the state in which they lived, at that very time, under the Roman power. The mention of Heaven’s mercy being extended to the Gentiles, always put them beside themselves. Christ only hinted the case of Elijah healing Naaman the *Syrian*, and that of Elisha being sent to a widow of *Sarepta*,<sup>†</sup> leaving the application to themselves. They understood him, and endeavoured instantly to destroy him. St. Paul, relating the story of his conversion, was

<sup>\*</sup> John viii. 33.

<sup>†</sup> Luke iv. 27.

patiently heard, till he touched upon the circumstance of his mission to the Gentiles.—“ They gave him audience to this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live !”\*

Now this notion was taken up in direct opposition to their own scriptures.

For they neglected to observe, what it was very obvious for any one to observe, who read the scriptures, that Abraham himself was not chosen and blessed, merely as Abraham, the son of Terah ; but as a servant of God tried in various ways, and, in all, found faithful and obedient. They should, therefore, have reflected, that his descendants, of course, stood on the same foot, and would not be accounted the children of Abraham, when they ceased to do the works of Abraham.†

The same lesson might have been learned from that part of the sacred history, which records the rejection of Ishmael the eldest son of Abraham ; and afterward, of Esau the first born of Isaac. These transactions evinced, that no dependance could be placed on the incident of being the seed of Abraham ; since, of that seed, for certain reasons, some had been rejected, while others were accepted. So it had been formerly ; and, therefore, in parallel circumstances, so it might be again.

Remarkable, to this purpose, was the case of their ancestors, who came out of Egypt. A promise was made, that they should enter into Canaan. But the promise was afterward revoked, because it was conditional. They fell in the wilderness, and others succeeded to the inheritance. And why did they not enter into rest ? For the same reason which keeps the Jews out at this hour ; because of their unbelief, and hardness of heart.

The light of God’s countenance was frequently withdrawn from the Israelites, when they sinned, and again restored, upon their repentance. Other qualifications were therefore requisite, without which, it little availed them to be of the house and lineage of Abraham.

It should have been recollected by the Jews, that the grand and capital promise made to Abraham was not limited to his natural posterity, but, on the contrary, in the most

\* Acts xxii. 22.

† See John viii. 39.

express terms that language could afford, extended to all others. It was the promise of the seed, that is, the Messiah, in whom, not Israel only according to the flesh, but "ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH should be blessed."\* And for this reason the promise was made, previous to the covenant of circumcision, under which the Jews claimed. In the state of uncircumcision "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness;" plainly becoming thereby the father of them who should afterward believe like him, though not circumcised; that is to say, the father of the Gentiles, or "nations of the earth," one day to "be blessed," in the promised Seed, or Messiah.

The Jews trusted in Moses.—Wherefore, then, did they not hear Moses, and attend to what he had said to them? In the plainest words he had told them, 1500 years before, what at length appeared to St. Peter, who, for some time, had the prejudices of a Jew about him; that "God did not respect persons."† He had told them, that if they rebelled against their God, they should be "punished, as *strangers* were punished; and as the *nations*, so should they perish."‡ Nay, he had clearly predicted, that the days should come, when, upon their rejection for their abominable iniquities, the Gentiles should be taken in their room, to "provoke them to jealousy."§ Before the time of Moses, their progenitor Jacob had declared, that whenever Shiloh should come, "the nations would be gathered to him."|| How very bold and explicit Isaiah continually is upon this topic of light, life, and salvation to be manifested, through Messiah, to the Gentiles, is well known. Malachi was the last of their prophets. He lived within 400 years of the appearance of Jesus. What a prophecy did he leave upon the subject, penned, as it were, with a sun beam—"I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand: for from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the *Gentiles*, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the *Heathen*, saith the Lord of hosts."¶

Such are the documents and the warnings, contained in the scriptures of the Old Testament, against the first tenet of the Jews, that, as the chosen seed of Abraham, they had an

\* Gen. xii. 3.

† Deut. vii. 19, 20.

|| Gen. xlix. 10.

† Deut. x. 17. See Acts x. 34.

§ Deut. xxxii. 20, 21.

¶ Mal. i. 10, 11.

exclusive and indefeasible right to the favours of heaven. Yet, with these scriptures in their hands, in their heads, in their mouths, and upon their phylacteries, boasting and glorying, upon every occasion, in an exact and accurate knowledge of them, did those men, after having crucified Jesus, persecute his apostles unto the death, from city to city, because the Gentiles were invited to share the benefits and blessings of the gospel.—Such is the force of prejudice! Such the illusion of self-love!

Proceed we to consider their *second* position, namely, that the law of Moses, on account of its own intrinsic efficacy, and without a view to any thing farther, was ordained for perpetual observance.

It was by no means safe, before an audience of Jews, to hint, though ever so remotely, at the inefficacy of the Mosaic rites, considered in themselves, to procure the divine favour; or to insinuate, though ever so covertly, the termination and abolition of that system. Some of the “blasphemous words,” charged upon the protomartyr St. Stephen, and for which he was stoned, were these; “that Jesus of Nazareth should change the customs, or rites, which Moses delivered.”\* In their ears, this was the worst of blasphemies. It does not appear, that Stephen had used such an expression; it is probable, at that season, he was more guarded; and they, who deposed their testimony against him, are styled, “false witnesses.” By urging some prophecy, or parallel, from the Old Testament, as he afterward urged several in his apology, it is likely he had intimated as much; and the words themselves, with which he stands charged, contain nothing more than the truth, sufficiently attested by the law itself; which all along carried in it the most plenary and abundant evidence of its own present inefficacy, and future dissolution; as they, who prided themselves in the study and interpretation of it, ought to have known.

For, upon the first view of the law—Let us, for a moment, suppose, with the Jew, that the legal ceremonies, in themselves, without having respect to any thing above and beyond them, were indeed effective of the purposes, for which they were said to be designed.—To what strange conclusions shall we be led? We must conclude, that the death of a beast could render the Deity propitious to the offerer; that a goat could carry the transgressions of a congregation into

\* Acts, vi. 13, 14.



the wilderness; that the blood of bulls could atone for sin; that water, with the ashes of a red heifer infused in it, could purge away the pollutions of the mind; and the like. But against such conclusions common sense exclaims aloud, and forces us to draw another, and the only just and proper inference, namely, that such rites derived their virtue not from themselves, but from persons and actions represented by them; that they were a figure for the time being; a shadow exhibiting to the faith of the pious and intelligent votary, the shape and lineaments of a substance, which did not appear. This must ever be the case of external ceremonies in religion; and we ourselves should be in a situation similar to that of the Jew, if blindly and ignorantly adhering to the letter of our own sacraments, exclusive of the things they signify, and the dispositions they require, we should suppose a power inherent in the baptismal water, to wash away guilt, and in the eucharistic elements, to confer pardon and peace,

Again. Be pleased to observe the opposite character given, at different times, of the same rites. One while it is said, that they were highly acceptable to God; that he was delighted with the savour of the sacrifices, and well pleased, as it is natural to suppose he should be, with the observance of his own institutions. At other times, we hear him declaring, with indignation, that his soul was weary with offerings, and hated the appointed feasts; that he could not away with the new moons and sabbaths; that incense was an abomination to him; and in a word, that he would not eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats. Now, if we take the law and its rites to have been the things really and ultimately designed, as in themselves excellent and efficacious, they would have been always pleasing to God, like duties intrinsically good and virtuous, of which we never hear the Almighty speaking, as he doth of these sacrifices and oblations. But if the legal rites were figurative; if they were symbolical of internal dispositions and actions; then would they necessarily become pleasing and displeasing to God, in different respects: pleasing, when accompanied by such internal dispositions and actions; when disjoined from them, and rested in as meritorious, to the last degree displeasing, hateful, and abominable. They are said to have been both the one and the other; and therefore, were most indubitably figurative. To any considering person the thing speaks itself.

But the scriptures of the Old Testament did not leave a truth of such importance to be inferred. They have expressly declared it.

To instance in that rite, which was the discriminating and characteristic mark of the seed of Abraham, circumcision. Moses himself hath affirmed, that a spiritual or mental circumcision was intended; and that the end of that commandment was the love of God, out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned.—“Circumcise (says he) the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiffnecked.”\* And again, “The Lord thy God shall circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”† When a Jew, reading this, still continues to think, that the legal rites were instituted for their own sake, and that their value lies in the *opus operatum*, is the veil on Moses’ face, or on his heart? For hath not Moses told *him*, in terms as plain as those in which St. Paul hath told *us*, that “He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”‡

Thus with regard to the many ablutions enjoined and practised under the law—“Wash ye, make ye clean,” saith God to his people, by the prophet Isaiah. So far, the terms are legal, and may be deemed ambiguous: but, by what immediately follows, their meaning is explained and fixed; “Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well.”§ As if he had said, what avails the outward and visible sign, without the thing signified by it? When we read in the 51st Psalm, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;”|| we may think we hear the voice of a Jew. But let us hear him again—“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit.”¶ What can a Christian—What

\* Deut. x. 16.

† Deut. xxx. 6.

‡ Rom. ii. ult.

§ Isa. i. 16, 17.

|| Ps. li. 7.

¶ Ver. 2. 9. &c.

can the devoutest and best informed Christian, in like unhappy circumstances, say more, than thus to pray, that God would by his mercy pardon the guilt, and efface the stain of sin, and renew the heart and soul again to righteousness, by the grace and power of his Holy Spirit? And whoever peruses with attention the writings of the prophets, will find, that it is always one part of their employment, to recall the Israelites from the dead letter to the living spirit of their law; to press upon them the necessity of suing for the divine favour by that true repentance, and that steadfast faith in God's promises, in the exercise of which it was the design of their ritual to train them. The office of a Christian minister, *mutatis mutandis*, is, in this particular, the same; and may be executed, with the utmost propriety, in the very same language. The noble and affecting exhortation in our commination office affords a striking proof of this; where the prophetic, and the evangelical expressions are finely interwoven, and, like the colours in a good picture, most harmoniously melt into each other.

To speak a word more, touching the *perpetuity* of the law of Moses. The Jew argues for it, from the immutability of God. But it is no more a reflection upon the divine immutability, that the law, having answered its end, should be abolished, than it is, that the world should be destroyed, after the accomplishment of the design for which it was created. He, who gave the law, foretold, in the clearest terms, by his prophets, that, at a certain period, it should cease; that he would make a new covenant by the Messias, and that the old covenant should be disannulled;\* that the old things should pass away, and be forgotten;† that the ark of the covenant should come no more to mind;‡ that the legal sacrifices should cease, and sacrifices of a purer kind be established in their room;§ that the Aaronical order of priesthood should be dissolved, and the order of Melchisedek be introduced by the Messiah; and that this latter priesthood should be an ordinance for ever.||

From these considerations it appears, that the law, in its nature, was figurative and transitory, being a dispensation interposed between the promise and its accomplishment. Previous to the law, the gospel was preached to Abraham,

\* Jer. xxxi. 31.

† Isa. xliii. 18, 19.

‡ Jer. iii. 16.

§ Mal. i. 10.

|| Ps. cx. 4. See Paschal's Thoughts, p. 187.

that in his seed, the Messiah, all nations should be blessed. The same gospel, at the beginning, had been preached to Adam, that the seed of the woman, or the Messiah, should bruise the head, that is, destroy the power, of the old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived our first parents, and deceiveth the whole world. But as there was to be a long interval between the promise and its performance, in the mean time, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made, the law took men under its tuition, prescribed to them their duty, showed them their guilt and their pollution, and pointed out the means of pardon and sanctification. When the promise was fulfilled, and the seed came, it had executed its office, and ceased of course, giving place to him, whom it had hitherto prefigured and predicted. It spoke by the mouth of the aged and dying Simeon, when, upon embracing the child Jesus in the temple, he exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel."

The *third* point, taken for granted by the Jews in our Saviour's time, was, that the possession of their city, temple, and country, in peace, wealth and prosperity, was the end of the promises.

But their own scriptures militate, with equal force, against this notion likewise.

For here, we must recollect again, that *the* promise, emphatically so styled, was made, in Abraham, to "all the nations of the earth," who could not possibly have any concern in the blessing of Canaan.

We must observe, that, if Canaan were indeed the end of the promise, the fathers of the Jewish people, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, never were, nor could hope to be partakers of it. They sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange land. God gave them none inheritance in it, not so much as to set their foot on. They confessed themselves to be strangers and pilgrims, travelling toward a country, in which they might fix their abode. Such they lived, and such they died. The country, therefore, which they sought, was one beyond the grave.

When the children of Abraham were settled in Canaan, true Israelites understood, that the rest they there enjoyed was



by no means the real, permanent, final rest, promised and intended. In the 95th Psalm, David, though king of Israel, and seated on the hill of Sion, still speaks of another future rest, warning the people of his time, that they fell not short of it, as their ancestors, who came out of Egypt, fell short of Canaan, through unbelief and disobedience. If Joshua had given them the true final rest, David so long afterward could not have spoken of another day of trial, and another rest reserved in store for the faithful. For this reason it is, that the same David, in that sublime and devout act of praise and thanksgiving uttered just before his death, recognizing the mercies of God to Israel in the land of promise, yet makes the very confession which the ancient patriarchs had made, when they had none inheritance in that land.—“We are strangers before thee, our God, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.”\*

If, therefore, the land of Canaan were not the true and final seat of rest, peace, and felicity for the people of God, we must conclude concerning that, as we did above concerning the law, that it terminated not in itself, nor was given for its own sake, but was also, in its kind, a figure, for the time then present, of a glorious and permanent possession in a better world, where all those, who live and die in the Lord, shall indeed rest from their labours. The Jews had sufficient grounds, from their own scriptures, to consider it as such. They should have considered it as such; and they should have carried on their thoughts to the rest and the inheritance of the saints in light, whither their fathers were gone before them, through faith in the promised seed, the Messiah, whose office it was, like another Joshua, by vanquishing the adverse powers, to open the kingdom of heaven, that true land of promise to all believers.

The *fourth* position maintained by the Jews was, that the prophecies warranted them in the expectation of a Messiah, who, as a temporal prince, should secure them in their possessions, by subduing their civil enemies, and reigning over them in Judea.

The same prejudice which operated with regard to the family of Abraham, the law of Moses, and the land of promise, operated likewise with regard to the Messiah.

\* 2 Chron. xxix. 15.

This was but a natural and necessary consequence. For if they had fixed their thoughts on their national privileges, their ceremonies, and the inheritance of Canaan, the Messiah by them desired must needs be one, who would defend and preserve them in the enjoyment of those privileges, those ceremonies, and that inheritance. Accordingly, the notion current among the Jews, when our Lord was upon earth, and which, we find, stuck fast to his disciples even after his resurrection, was, that Messiah, when he came, should "restore again the kingdom to Israel." \* And the grand argument insisted on in the Talmud, and by the rabbins, is, that he did not subdue the nations by the force and terror of his arms. He overcame not the Gentiles, say they, with martial power; he loaded us not with their spoils; he neither enlarged our dominion, nor increased our power.†

Now the scriptures do undoubtedly describe Messiah, as one who should deliver his people from their enemies, and reign over them in glorious majesty. The Jews construed those passages of a temporal deliverance from the Roman yoke, and a temporal reign in Palestine. But did they construe them aright? Do not the same scriptures unfold the design of his coming, and the process of the redemption by him, in the fullest and most particular manner? Surely they do. How many passages are there always allowed by the ancient, and not now denied by the modern Jews, to belong to Messiah, which describe him as poor, lowly, despised, afflicted, oppressed, dying, dead? Would you now compose a man's character, without accounting for the contrarieties in it? Can you be said to have composed that of the Messiah, while you leave out one half of it? Are you not bound to find a person, in whom all the seemingly contradictory particulars are reconciled? They are easily, they are completely reconciled in the person of Jesus, as set forth, by us Christians, in his twofold nature, as God and man. They never were, they never will, they never can be reconciled in any other: and the Jews, by their modern fiction of two different Messiahs, to answer the purpose, have at once justified us, and given sentence against themselves.

But that the force of the prophetic testimony in favour of the Messiahship of Jesus may appear at one view, permit me, in a concise and summary way, to recall the several particu-

\* Acts i. 6.

† See Paschal, p. 170.

lars of it to your remembrance, as I find them collected by a very learned and eminent writer.

The prophets speak of a new and second covenant, which God would make with his people: they mention, not once, or twice, but very often, the conversion of the Gentiles from superstition and idolatry, to the worship of the true God; they speak of four successive empires, the last of which was the Roman empire; and under this last empire, they say, that a new and everlasting kingdom should be established, by one, to whom God should give absolute power and dominion. A great person was to come, who should be Immanuel, or God with us, the Son of God and the Son of man, the seed of Abraham and of David; born of a virgin, poor and obscure, and yet one whom David calls his Lord; the Lord to whom the temple belonged, the mighty God, a great king, an everlasting priest, though not of the tribe of Levi; born at Bethlehem; a prophet like unto Moses, but greater than Moses; a prophet, who should preach to the poor and meek, and proclaim liberty to the captives, and comfort the mourners, and heal the broken hearted; who should proclaim his gospel, first and principally, in the land of Zebulon and Napthali, in Galilee of the Gentiles; who should have a forerunner in the spirit of Elias, crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; who should instruct in a mild and peaceable manner, without wrath and contention, before the destruction of the temple, in which temple he should be seen and heard; who should enter into Jerusalem meek and humble, and riding on an ass; who should work miracles more than Moses and all the prophets, and miracles of the merciful and beneficent kind, open the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf, and make the dumb to praise God, and the lame to leap as an hart; who, notwithstanding all his power and goodness, should be rejected by the greater part of the nation, to whom he should be a stumbling block; who should be despised and afflicted, a man of sorrow, and cut off from the land of the living; who should have enemies numerous, powerful, crafty, and wicked; who should be accused by false witnesses, betrayed by an intimate and particular friend, sold for thirty pieces of silver, and the money given for a potter's field, when it had been flung away by the traitor, who should not live long after his crime, and whose office should be filled up by another: that the enemies of this blessed person

should use him contumeliously, buffet him, and spit upon him, while he should be led like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening his mouth, but to intercede for the transgressors; that his enemies should strip him of his raiment, divide it among themselves, and cast lots upon it, surround him, pierce his hands and his feet, mock him, and shake their heads at him, give him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink; that he should be reduced to so weak and languishing a condition, that his bones might all be counted, his heart should melt within him, and his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth; that he should be brought to the dust of death; that he should be pierced, and yet not one of his bones be broken; that he should be laid in the sepulchre of a rich and honourable man, none of his enemies hindering it; that he should rise again, before he had seen corruption, and subdue his enemies, and ascend into heaven, and sit at God's right hand, and be crowned with honour and glory, and see his seed, and prosper, and justify many, and be adored by kings and princes; that then Jerusalem should be made desolate, and the Jews dispersed in all lands, and the Gentiles should be converted, and flow into the church.\*

In the application of a single prophecy, especially if it be a figurative one, interest and ingenuity may raise many doubts and difficulties; but against the accumulated weight of evidence, *καθ' υπερβολην εις υπερβολην*, afforded by so many plain literal predictions, all pointing to one person, all punctually and exactly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and in him alone, no tolerably plausible objection can ever be made. Let candour and integrity, reason and common sense, be judges in the cause, and they must determine—they have already determined by the virtuous Nathanael—"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel."

Such, then, is the case of the Jews, such the evidence they rejected, and such the cause of their rejecting it. Having fixed their eyes and their hopes upon the shadow, they set at nought the substance, though appearing at the time and in the manner described by their own prophets. Having rejected their God, they have been rejected by him; and the fatal errors, which occasioned their infidelity, have received a final and tremendous refutation, by the divine judgments inflicted upon them.

\* Dr. Jortin's "Remarks on Eccles. Hist." vol. i. p. 112.



To demonstrate that, as the seed of Abraham, they had no exclusive and indefeasible right to the favours of heaven, those favours have been withdrawn from them, and conferred on the Gentiles.

To show that the law of Moses was not in itself efficacious, or designed to be perpetual, they are put under an absolute incapacity of observing it any more. They have no altar, no priest, no temple.

To reprove the fond notion, that Canaan was the end of the promises, they have been driven out of it, and forbidden to approach it. In a state of utter desolation, it has passed successively into the hands of their enemies of every denomination, and never reverted to them.

To eradicate the ideas of a temporal Messiah, and dominion over the nations, after beholding the sceptre departed from Judah, after having been deceived by a multitude of impostors, they continue to this hour, at the end of 1700 years, fugitives and vagabonds upon the earth.

And now, let us be permitted, in our turn, to address an argument to the deist upon this topic. You demand ocular proof of the prophecy accomplished. It is before you, in an instance without a parallel. It was repeatedly foretold, both in the Old and New Testament, that, for the rejection and murder of their Messiah, the Jews should be dispersed into all countries; yet that they should not be swallowed up and lost among their conquerors, but should still subsist, to latest times, a distinct people. By Jeremiah, God declared, he would make an end of the nations, their oppressors, but he would not make an end of them.\* You will not say, this prediction was written since the event; and certainly, an occurrence more singular, or improbable, could not have been predicted. In the course of human affairs, who hath heard such a thing;—who hath seen such a thing? Yet, so it is. The mighty monarchies of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, are vanished, like the shadows of the evening, or the phantoms of the night. Their places know them no more. Nothing remains of them, but their names: while this little contemptible people, as you are wont to style the Jews, strangely secure, without a friend or protector, amidst the wreck of empires; oppressed, persecuted, harrassed always, by edicts and executioners, by murders and massacres, hath

\* Jer. xxx. 11.

outlived the very ruins of them all. Except you see signs and wonders you will not believe. Behold then a sign and a wonder, the accomplishment of prophecy in a standing miracle—the *bush of Moses*, surrounded by flames, ever burning, and never consumed! Contemplate the sight, as it deserves; and be not faithless, but believing; for this is the Lord's doing, and therefore so marvellous in our eyes.

That the gospel, when slighted by the Jews, might not be without its fruit, and that God might have a church and people to supply their place, the apostles turned to the Gentiles; so that *their* fall became the riches of the world, and good was brought out of evil. Let the warning, given us by our own apostle, be ever sounding in our ears, though, when we consider the state of religion among us, it may perhaps make them tingle.—“Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”\*

The cause of Jewish infidelity was an hatred of the power of godliness, concealed under the cloak of zeal for its form, and occasioned by a love of wealth, power, and parade, a notion of privilege, preeminence, and indefectibility. And is it not astonishing, that, with such an example before her eyes, the church of Rome should be pursuing the same course, and splitting upon the same rock? Let us be thankful, that we are come out of her; and let us guard against the shadow of her crime, by constantly bearing in mind, that the promises are spiritual, and that they are conditional; that if the light of the gospel, which is vouchsafed us, be abused, God can remove it; that, like the bright ruler of the day, it may proceed westward, and leave us in darkness; that he who converted Britons and Saxons, can call the tribes of America to the faith, and “of those stones raise up children unto Abraham.”

To conclude—When we see the Jews, for so great a length of time, preserved under calamities which would have been long since the ruin of any other people, our regard and attention ought to be strongly excited toward them. Extraordinary was their beginning, and their progress: more extraordinary, perhaps, will be their end: for if they abide not still in unbelief, they, as the natural branches, *may* surely

\* Rom. xi. 20, 21

be grafted in again: and there can be little doubt, but that such an event *will* take place. It is said, they are dispersed, “till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled;” \* and that “blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” † It seems evidently to be implied, that at the period mentioned, whenever it shall come, their dispersion will cease, and their blindness be removed. Glorious things are spoken of them by their own prophets, which do not seem, as yet, to have received their full and proper accomplishment. When the Gentiles had revolted from the true religion, revealed after the fall, the church subsisted, for two thousand years, in the family of Abraham. Since the apostacy of the Jews, it hath subsisted nearly the same space of time among the Gentiles. And what saith St. Paul?—“As ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.” ‡ The very mercy shown to the Gentiles is to be a means of bringing the Jews to the faith: and perhaps, we can no where meet with an instance of a more popular and affectionate turn, than that by which St. Paul seems to find a reason for his zeal to convert the Gentiles, in his love to his own countrymen the Jews, that he may thereby provoke them to emulation. Let us second his endeavours to effect this, by our love and our good works: let us, in our lives and conversations, show them a religion, whose attractive excellence may invite and compel them to embrace it. Nor let us omit to observe, that, as Gentiles, while we labour to promote their interest, we likewise shall, by so doing, promote our own. So signal an event, as the conversion of the Jews, cannot but operate again on the lukewarm and degenerate nations, as well as on those that are still unconverted, to the production of a more plentiful and joyful harvest, than has yet perhaps been seen. “For if the fall of them were the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? If the casting away of them were the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” § — The resurrection of Christianity, in all the splendour of truth, and

\* Luke xxi. 24.

† Rom. xi. 25.

‡ Rom. xi. 30, 31.

§ Rom. xi. 12, 15.

the beauty of holiness! Nor let us be staggered by the contrary appearances of things in the world. These cannot be more contrary, at the conversion of the Jews, than they were at the conversion of the Gentiles. From the Jewish church, when in its lowest and most unpromising state, went forth those, who brought the nations to the faith; from the Gentile church, when in a condition equally low and unpromising, may go forth those, who shall cause Israel to return to it—Blessed times! Delightful prospect!—We see it, but not now; we behold it, but, perhaps, not near. We live, and probably, like the ancient patriarchs, we may die, not having received the promises. But a generation to be born shall receive them, and shall praise the Lord, who thus, at different periods, “hath shut up all in unbelief, that he may” finally “have mercy upon all.”—Happy, in the mean season, shall we be, if, while we are preparing ourselves, we may, in any the least degree, by our prayers and our endeavours, contribute toward the preparation of our elder brethren, the once beloved and highly favoured seed of Abraham, for the approach of that awful and important day, when their and our Messiah, who, as at this time, came in humility, to abase the proud, shall return in glory, to exalt the humble.

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## DISCOURSE IX.

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE.

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*That Disciple whom Jesus loved.*—John xxi. 7.

No writings are better calculated to improve mankind, than those which relate the history of the lives of such persons, as have been famous, in their generations, for wisdom and virtue. We are apt to be terrified by the strictness and severity of holiness, while it meets us only in precept; but when we behold it realised in the example of one, made of the same flesh and blood, living in the same world, and exposed to the same temptations with ourselves, we are



fired, at the sight, with a noble emulation, and are ashamed of any longer fancying ourselves not able to do what so many others have done before us. St. Augustine, in his Confessions, describing the conflicts he endured with temptation in his younger years, tells us, how greatly he was strengthened, and animated to the fight, by imagining he saw virtue standing, in a visible form, before his eyes, and pointing to the noble company of those who had been conspicuous examples of purity; with which consideration she gently reproached him in these words—"Why canst not thou do what *these* have done?" From the fair light of one good example, innumerable others may catch the heavenly flame, until the whole church become illuminated and adorned with bright and shining patterns of every thing that is lovely and praiseworthy.

Biography hath also another advantage, namely, that it is sure to *entertain*, because it gratifies that natural curiosity men have to be acquainted with the history of others; which curiosity is then directed to its proper end, when it incites us to make the wisdom and experience of past ages our own, in order to become proficient in the mystery of godliness, and to practise every art of virtuous living.

But what chiefly recommends this kind of writing to Christians is, the use made of it in the holy scriptures, which are, for the most part, *historical*, the wisdom of God having thought it better to set before us the duties of our calling, as they present themselves in the life of Christ and those of his saints, than to give us any regular and exact system of them. The church, by the appointment of her festivals, hath contrived to turn our thoughts from time to time upon these lives, that so, neglect and forgetfulness may not deprive us of the many benefits resulting from a due contemplation of them.

The saint of this day is John the apostle and evangelist. And where will heraldry, among all her boasted titles of honour, find one that can stand in competition with that which was conferred upon him;—"The disciple whom Jesus loved!" Beloved of Him, who was himself the beloved of his Father! Could we suppose a prince to reign universal monarch over all the kingdoms of the world, the sole fountain of every kind of earthly honour to every individual man under the whole heavens, how gladly, at the

hour of death, would he resign all, to be the beloved disciple of such a Master? And if nothing be esteemed too high a price for the favour of an earthly sovereign, a man, whose breath is in his nostrils, what shall we not give to obtain the love of him who abideth for ever, and will make us partakers of his own immortality? We are all the disciples of Christ, and candidates for his favour. Let us, therefore, take a view of the life and character of the person who enjoyed so large a share of it, as to be styled eminently—"that disciple whom Jesus loved;" since, to be like him, is the way to be loved of our Master, as he was.

St. John was the son of Zebedee and Salome; the same Salome whose pious care had provided spices to embalm the body of our Lord, when Mary Magdalen and she, coming early to the sepulchre, found him risen from the dead. The place of his birth was one of the sea towns in Galilee, probably either Bethsaida, or Capernaum, where, with his father Zebedee, and his elder brother James, afterward distinguished from another of that name by the title of *St. James the Great*; he followed the fishing trade. Youth is no obstacle in the way of obtaining the favour of Christ. The disciple whom he loved was the youngest of all the apostles. And certain it is, that religion never appears to greater advantage, than in the persons of those who "remember their Creator in the days of their youth," and are admitted early into the number of the disciples of the holy Jesus. It is then like a diamond set in gold. There is something more noble in renouncing the world for the love of Christ, when the relish for sensible enjoyments is at the highest, than there can be in doing it when the evil days come, in which there is no farther pleasure or satisfaction to be had in earthly things. He surely is not so likely to accomplish his journey, who begins it when the sun is going down, as he is, who sets out at the hour of its rising. Youth, like the morning, is the proper season for every task that requires time and pains. Then all the powers of body and soul are fresh and vigorous, as those of one awaked from a sound and kindly sleep. Then is the golden opportunity, the sweet hour of prime, and the day is before us.—"The night cometh, when no man can work. I have written unto you, young men (saith John himself), because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye

have overcome the wicked one.”\* Rejoice then, O young man, in thy youth, not because thou art able to riot in excess and wantonness, as the heathen who know not God, but because thou hast it in thy power to become, like the youthful John, the beloved of thy Master, who seeketh such to worship him.

Nor let him of low degree neglect to take comfort in the consideration, that the beloved disciple of Christ was a common *fisherman*. The distinctions of high and low, rich and poor, noble and vulgar, obtain in this world, and in this world only. In the kingdom of God they cease, and are no more. There, virtue only gives precedence, and the meanest mechanic takes place of the nobles and kings of the earth, if he were a better Christian than they were. The vanity and the folly of those, whose confidence is placed in titles and pedigrees, will then appear in its proper light, when the supposed carpenter's Son shall be seen on his throne of glory, and the fisherman seated at his right hand.

The account of John being called by our blessed Lord, from his employment of fishing, to that of preaching the gospel, is thus given us, Matt. iv. 21.—“And Jesus going on from thence,” that is, from the place where he had just before called Peter and Andrew, “saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship, and their father, and followed him.” Their minds had been prepared for the advent of the Messiah by the sermons of the Baptist, who indeed had pointed him out to Andrew, and another disciple, not improbably John himself, for the Lamb of God. Upon his appearance and call, therefore, they readily received and obeyed him, laying the foundation of the Christian building in the renunciation of the world. And here it always must be laid by every one who is desirous of being “the disciple whom Jesus loveth.” All are not called to forsake their occupations, and to commence preachers, as the apostles were, Christ having appointed in his church a regular way of entering into the ministry; and at this door, when duly prepared for it by a suitable education, all are now to enter, who find themselves inclined and disposed by the good Spirit of God to undertake that blessed work.

\* 1 John ii. 14.

But every one is called to be ready, in heart and mind, to quit all that comes in competition with duty, and to follow the Saviour in the path of holy living. It is necessary for us all to leave those companies, and engagements, and ways of living, which ensnare our souls, and entangle our affections in the toils of sin. And when duty to God requires it, we must forsake our friends and relations, rather than reject the salvation of Christ. Whoever is in error, or in sin, will, by the good providence of God, be often called to come out of it in the course of his life. He shall, perhaps, hear a sermon that shows him to himself, and awakens him; or some kind and charitable friend shall admonish him; or the holy Spirit shall cause his own conscience to be his reprover. Then, O sinner, it is, that Jesus calleth *thee*. Obey him instantly; leave all that, whatever it be, whereby thou offendest, though near and dear to thee; join thyself to him, as thy Master, and director, in all things; and thou, as well as St. John, shalt be beloved of him.

When our Lord gave his apostles their commission to preach the gospel, he surnamed our evangelist and his brother James, *Boanerges*, that is, in our language, *sons of thunder*. Thereby he intimated the powerful effects of their preaching that word, which is frequently compared to thunder; being, like that, the voice of God speaking from heaven, mighty in its operation. If the one shake the earth, throw down lofty trees and towers, and by the lightning which accompanieth it, dissolve the hardest substances, the other shaketh the empire of sin, casteth down every thing which exalteth itself against heaven, blasting and consuming the corruption of the heart. Such are the effects of the word, when preached with power: and happy are they who experience them, in reading and hearing the gospels, and more especially that of St. John, who, on the wings of contemplation and faith, soaring aloft, like his own eagle, bears the thunder of the word, and causes its glorious voice to be heard under the whole heaven.

In the course of the evangelical history, we find St. John, in conjunction with St. Peter and St. James, admitted to the knowledge and view of some more private miracles and transactions, when the other apostles had not that honour. These were the three who attended their Master, when he raised the daughter of Jarius from the dead.—“ He suffered



no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John." And this is, in some sense, the happy lot of every disciple whom Jesus loveth. For although he no more "know Christ after the flesh," or see him working his miracles in person, as St. John did, yet, by faith, the wonders of divine love and mercy are manifest unto him; and he beholds accomplished in himself and others that great work, which the miracles of Christ were designed to represent, the work of conversion and salvation. This work Jesus only can effect, and none but his beloved disciples know and understand it. This secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he showeth to them the glory of his power in raising a soul from sin to righteousness, no less than he showed it to the apostles in raising the maid from death to life.

The same three disciples accompanied their Lord, exclusive of all the rest, at the two most remarkable scenes of his exaltation and humiliation; that is to say, when he was transfigured upon Mount Tabor, and when he was in an agony, in the garden of Gethsemane. With regard to the former we read, that "he took Peter, and James, and John, up into a high mountain, apart, and was transfigured before them." There they beheld his mortal body suddenly clothed upon with light, as with a garment; they beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten; they saw the Sun of Righteousness shining in his strength; they saw Moses and Elias glorified with him, as the law and the prophets always appear, when seen in company with Jesus; and they heard the voice from heaven declaring him to be the beloved of the Father. Again, at his passion, "he taketh with him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and very heavy." Then they beheld him encompassed with the infirmities of a man, and beset by the powers of darkness; they beheld him humbled under the load of our sins; they saw the sun overcast with a cloud; and heard the same divine person praying in a bitter agony, as one smitten of God in his anger, and afflicted unto death. And happy is every disciple, whom Jesus so loveth, as to admit him, by faith, to behold and dwell upon the contemplation of his blessed Master, in these his two states of exaltation and humiliation; the glory of his divine, and the sufferings of his human nature. These are subjects, on which a man can never meditate, but with

infinite profit and advantage. By ascending the holy mount, and there viewing, in the transfiguration of Jesus, the glory of his person, and an ensample of that glory which he shall bestow on his saints, at the resurrection, he is armed against the pain and shame of the cross, and strengthened to undergo his portion of sufferings in the world. By attending his Redeemer in the garden, during his agony, he learns the intolerable punishments due to sin; and the amazing love of him who would descend from Tabor to Gethsemane, to bear them for sinners; he is prepared to take up his cross, and to be conformed to Christ in sufferings, from thence looking back to the glory which the Son of God left for a time, that he might bestow it on his beloved disciples for ever. Whosoever hath so digested in his heart these two subjects, as to be able to reduce the considerations on them to practice, hath attended his Master, with St. John, on the mount, and in the garden.

Three times we hear in the gospels the beloved disciple reproved by his Master, to show us, that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and purgeth, till, like the branch of a well dressed vine, he bring forth more and better fruit. Once a spark of ambition, lighting upon the spirits of the two brothers, James and John, had suddenly inflamed them with a vehement desire of preeminence above their colleagues in the ministry: they wanted to "sit, one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom." Our Lord gave them to understand, that they who were called to be his disciples and apostles, were called to do his work, to labour and to suffer for the service of the church, and the salvation of souls, and should esteem it sufficient to be exalted, like their blessed Master, in heaven, after the work was done. Thus the two young candidates for promotion stood reproved. Made wiser by the instructions of their Lord, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them at the day of Pentecost, they thought no more of preceding their brethren, except in diligence and patience: they renounced self, preached the gospel, suffered persecution, were crowned indeed, but it was with thorns: and thus, at length, in a far better sense, they obtained their wish, of sitting upon thrones with Christ in his kingdom.

At another time, the two disciples, James and John, not bearing to see their Lord rejected by the schismatical Sa-

maritans, were for calling fire from heaven to consume them, after the example of the prophet Elijah. But Christ rebuked them, telling them, "they knew not what manner of spirit they were of, for the Son of man was come to save the lives of men, not to destroy them." The present is the day of grace and mercy, long-suffering and forbearance, with Christ, and it ought to be so with his disciples. The hour is coming, when, like Elijah, who represented him in his judicial capacity, he shall execute the vengeance written, and burn up his enemies on every side. But the time is not yet.

The third reproof St. John met with from his Master was likewise for an instance of indiscreet zeal, in forbidding a person to cast out devils in Christ's name, because he followed not them.—"Forbid him not (says Christ), for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us, is on our part. For whoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, he shall not lose his reward."\* No emulation or jealousy should prevent our encouraging every man to do good, though not in all points as we are, or could wish him to be. Whatever real good he does, it is God who does it in him, and in time that God may reveal all other things to him; toward which, we ourselves, by treating him with tenderness and kindness, may be made instrumental.

But these offences upon Christ's admonitions having been repented of and forsaken, they deprived not our apostle of the place he had obtained in his Lord's favour. For, at the last supper, we find him sitting next to Jesus, and, as the manner then was, reclining on his breast: as it is the privilege of the beloved disciple, when admitted to the supper of the Lamb, to pour all his prayers and complaints into the bosom of his Redeemer, who is always ready to hear, always mighty to save.

At the apprehension of Jesus, John fled with the rest, but, quickly returning again, entered into the high priest's palace, and attended his blessed Master through every stage of his passion, till we behold him taking his station at the foot of the cross, where he is usually drawn in pictures of the crucifixion, with a countenance full of grief and love

\* Mark ix. 38.

unutterable. From the cross Jesus commended his holy mother to the care of St. John, who from thenceforth, happy in an opportunity of showing his love to his Lord, as well as of entertaining such a guest, "took her to his own home," where she continued till her death, treated by him with the duty and affection of a son. Let the disciple, then, who would show himself worthy the love of Christ, often contemplate and sympathize with his suffering Lord, placing himself, in imagination, at the foot of the cross, and looking, with the eye of faith, on him who was crucified thereon; let him abide by the persecuted truth and the afflicted servants of Jesus, in the hour of darkness and sorrow; and let him, for Christ's sake, and, in obedience to his repeated injunctions, honour and show kindness to the church so long as he lives, and be a dutiful son to her.

Upon the first tidings of the resurrection, St. John, running with St. Peter, outran him, and came first to the sepulchre, as the soul, that has the love of Christ abiding in her, will always be foremost in quest of him.—It was St. John who discovered Jesus to St. Peter, when he appeared in the habit of a stranger at the sea of Tiberias.—"That disciple, whom Jesus loved, saith to Peter, It is the Lord." He who loves Christ, will always know him when he comes in the disguise of a *stranger*, or a *poor man*: he will know, that *it is the Lord* who asks relief of him in their persons; and he will inform others of the same great truth.—It was concerning St. John, that a report went among the disciples as if he was never to die, grounded by mistake on our Lord's answer to St. Peter's question—"Lord, what shall this man do?—If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" But, alas, St. John loved Christ too well to think an exemption from death, for the sake of living in such a world as this, a thing to be desired. And whoever loves his Master as he did, will be of the same opinion.

After the effusion of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost, we read of St. John, in the character of an apostle, using his gifts for the good of mankind, healing the sick, preaching the gospel, thrown into prison, and brought forth before the Jewish council, but still undaunted in bearing his testimony; herein leaving an example to his successors, the ministers of Christ, through all generations.

From the ecclesiastical histories we learn, that, after



preaching the gospel, and founding many churches in Asia, he was sent bound from thence to Rome, at the command of the tyrant Domitian, who had him cast into a caldron of boiling oil. But the God, who preserved the three children in the midst of the fiery furnace, brought the apostle out of the caldron unhurt, to convince us, that nothing can harm "the disciple whom Jesus loveth." The emperor, however, not at all moved by this miraculous deliverance, banished the holy man to a wretched and comfortless island, called Patmos, where he saw heaven opened, and beheld those glorious visions recorded in the book of Revelation: as God often vouchsafes a larger portion of spiritual joys and comforts to his servants, when they are secluded from those of the world.

Upon the death of the emperor Domitian, many of his cruel edicts were revoked by his successor; when St. John, taking advantage of the indulgence, returned to Ephesus: and finding Timothy the bishop of that church martyred, he took upon himself the government of it, till, in a good old age of about an hundred years, he most willingly resigned his meek and gentle spirit into the hands of his Lord and Saviour, to experience the fulness of his love, and possess the glories he had so often contemplated.

These are the great outlines of St. John's life and character. But, after all, whoever would be thoroughly acquainted with him, in order to become like him, must survey and copy that fair picture which he hath drawn of himself in his divine writings, where we sometimes behold the lofty flights of the eagle, and at others hear the plaintive voice of the turtle; we behold him viewing and describing the glories of Christ in his godhead and kingdom; we hear him relating the sweetly sorrowful and loving discourses of his dear Master, in his state of humiliation. Let these holy books, therefore, be in our hands, until they shall have wrought their proper work in our hearts; that is to say, until, by believing the doctrines and practising the duties taught therein, we shall have learned to live the life of faith and charity. So shall we be CHRISTIANS, in word and in deed; so shall we be true followers of the saint of this day; so shall we be "the DISCIPLES whom Jesus will LOVE."

## DISCOURSE X.

RACHEL COMFORTED.

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*Thus saith the Lord, a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping: Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.—Jer. xxxi. 15—17.*

OF the events which befel the church of Israel in old time, many were by Providence ordained and disposed to be figurative of other events, in the latter days, relative to the church Christian, or universal. Let it be supposed, for example, in the present instance, that the Babylonish captivity, and subsequent restoration, to which these words of Jeremiah relate, did, like the Egyptian bondage, and the redemption therefrom, represent that more wretched, durable, and general captivity, in which mankind were detained by their grand enemy, with the restoration from it, which the Son of God, as at this season, was born to effect. And let us try, upon this plan, to show the beauty and propriety of the application which St. Matthew has made of the passage to the slaughter of the Bethlehemitish infants, and the lamentations of those who were thus bereaved of their children, by the sword of Herod.

It is not easy, perhaps, to find a more judicious illustration of the case in hand, than the following one, given by the excellently learned Dr. Jackson, to whose most useful labours, on a curious and difficult subject, I must here, once for all, acknowledge myself indebted for the substance of what I am now about to lay before you.

“We know,” says this able divine, “that a map, though in itself a thousand times less than the least parcel of enclosed ground, may represent the exact form or proportion

of the country whose name it bears, though that be ten thousand times bigger than the largest field that our eyes can look upon. And thus hath the wisdom of God, under the same words and phrases, included two deliverances, of which the one is a map to the other. He, therefore, who shall deny passages to be literally meant of the deliverance of Judah and Benjamin from Babylon, because they are only fulfilled in our deliverance by Christ, will give the Jew no small advantage; he will commit as great an oversight, as if an heir, possessed of a goodly estate, should burn the map, or terrar of it, which his ancestors had truly taken for the benefit of their successors, if they should know how to use it, when any controversy should arise concerning the bounds or extent of their inheritance. The Jew, on the contrary, in denying these places to be meant of Christ and us, because they have been literally verified of the deliverance of his fathers by Zorobabel, and Joshua the priest, is like a man distracted, who boasts he hath a goodly heritage, because he can show the map, or engrossed terrar of those lands, of which the law has deprived him, since he knew not how to use them aright."

In the prosecution of this design, permit me, in the—

First place, To collect and present to you the historical circumstances concerning the person introduced by Jeremiah, as making lamentation over her children, and the occasion of her so doing, with the prophet's consolatory address to her upon that occasion: after which, we shall be prepared, in the—

Second place, To take a view of those parallel circumstances, which offer themselves in the lamentation made by the Bethlehemitish mothers, and the cause thereof, with the consideration which was to administer comfort to *them*, in the day of their great and bitter affliction.

The mournful scene is laid by Jeremiah in Ramah, a city belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, of which tribe, it may be observed, the prophet himself was a member, as we learn from the first verse in his book;—"The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin." The person introduced by him, as making lamentation, is Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, and the mother of that tribe. She had before borne Joseph, at which time, by divine instinct, with allusion to the name

just imposed, she said, "The LORD shall *add* to me another son." In childbirth, however, through the prevalence of her pains, she was induced to give up her former hopes of a second son for lost. Her attendant endeavoured to comfort her with her own prediction; "Fear not, for thou shalt have this son also." Yet, "when her soul was in departing (for she died!)"—never surely was there a more affecting parenthesis—"when her soul was in departing (for she died!) she called his name *Benoni*," that is, *the son of my sorrow*. "His father," seeking to avert the omen with speed, "called him *Benjamin*," or *the son of the right hand*, that is, of power and glory.

*Heu nunquam vana parentum auguria*—the observation of an heathen poet, is found more particularly verified in the history of the patriarchs, because among them there was often a foresight more than human, and the prospect into futurity was opened to them by a light from above. The different fates of the tribe of Benjamin seem to have answered the different names imposed at the birth of its founder, by father and mother. No tribe more valorous than that; none more afflicted with disasters and calamities. At one time slaughtered by its fellow tribes, almost to excision, a true *Benoni* to Rachel, who, had she been alive, must have "wept for her children, with an exceeding bitter weeping;" at another, restored to populousness and prosperity, placed, as it were, at the head of the rest, furnishing the first king, who ruled God's people Israel, and realizing the name and character of *Benjamin*, the *son of the right hand*.

Upon the revolt of the ten tribes, Benjamin adhered to Judah, then the royal tribe, the tribe that gave birth to David, the tribe from which, in the fulness of time, a greater than David was to descend. When Jeremiah uttered the words now under our consideration, Judah was closely besieged in Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, in whose way thither the land of Benjamin lay. It experienced, therefore, of course, all the horrors of invasion. It was miserably wasted, and its inhabitants were carried away into captivity. This is the reason why old Rachel still renews her former complaint, and will not be persuaded, but that Benjamin must still be *Benoni*. She and her daughters (for under the name of Rachel we must comprehend all the woful mothers of that tribe), fill the heavens with their outcries, whilst



their children are forced from their embraces into miserable bondage in Babylon. And though mention be only made of Ramah, a city of Benjamin, yet must we imagine the wailings to have been as loud and bitter about Bethlehem, which, though in the tribe of Judah, was upon the borders of Benjamin, and near unto the place where Rachel died; as we read in Genesis;—"Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is *Bethlehem*, and Jacob set a pillar upon her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day."\* Such was "the voice heard" in the days of Jeremiah, the "lamentation, and the bitter weeping;" when "Rachel," as the general mother, and representative of all the mothers in the tribe, "weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not." As a people, they had no civil existence. They were, in that sense, lost; they were dead; they were gone into captivity.

It was under these circumstances, that the prophet addressed the disconsolate mother—considering him as a *Benjaminite*, we may say, *his* disconsolate mother—"Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy; and there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."—As if he had said in other words—Remember, O Rachel, my mother, the days that are past, and call to mind God's wonders of old time. Remember how thou sorrowedst, when thou broughtest forth my father Benjamin, as fearing lest he should have died with thee, or before thee. Yet after thy pains, hadst thou this joy, that a man was born into the world. And though thou didst impose upon him a name betokening sorrow, yet his father wisely changed it into one predictive of better things. Remember, when Benjamin, for the good of his brethren, was called to go down into Egypt, how Jacob supposed him lost, and complained that he was bereaved of his children. But notwithstanding these ill bodings, Benjamin, at length, returned in safety, with his brother Judah; the father was again blessed with the sight of his youngest and best beloved son, the light of his eyes, and the staff of his old age. Such, at this time, my mother, is thy fear and sorrow; but greater, hereafter, shall be thy comfort, and thy joy. Benjamin is

\* Gen. xxxv. 20.

indeed led captive into Babylon; but *Judah* is once more gone with him, as his pledge, and if he bring him not back again, let the blame be his, yea mine, yea God's for ever. "For thus saith the Lord, if my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them—yea, I have sworn by my holiness that I will not fail David." Now, my mother, while this promise lasts, in general, to Israel, as Abraham's seed, Benjamin must have his portion in the blessing. And while it remains good in particular to the seed of David, Benjamin, for his faithful adherence to Judah, in prosperity and adversity, must participate with him in the prerogative. And when the kingdom shall be restored, as restored it will be, whoever shall sit on the left hand, faithful Benjamin must sit on the right hand of the throne of David.

This, taking all circumstances into the account, seems to have been the import of Jeremiah's consolatory address to Rachel, in the day of her calamity. And his words, or rather those of the Almighty, were, in their fullest import, made good to her. Within seventy years, it came to pass, that the posterity of Benjamin returned, with Judah, into the land of promise, and inhabited Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other bordering cities, promiscuously with the royal tribe.—"Her work was rewarded;" her patient expectation, in faith and hope, of the promises made her, failed not of its fruit in the appointed season: her "children came again from the land of the enemy to their own border," as the Lord had foretold by his prophet; they "returned, and came to Sion with songs; joy was upon their heads," and in their hearts; "and sorrow and sighing flew away!"

We are now prepared to take a view, as was proposed in the—

Second place, of those parallel circumstances, which offer themselves, in the lamentation of the Bethlehemitish mothers, and the cause thereof, with the consideration which was to administer comfort to *them*, in the day of their great and most bitter affliction.

The death of the tribe of Benjamin, in conjunction with

the tribe of Judah, in the time of Jeremiah, was a civil death—a departure into captivity. Their restoration from it was, consequently, a civil restoration, a restoration to their ancient city and polity, in their own land. The death of the Bethlehemish infants was a bodily death by the sword of Herod; their restoration must, therefore, be a restoration to the bodily life, thus violently taken from them, that is, it must be a resurrection. Rachel's present lamentation for the bodily death of her children must have a comfort answerable to it, as her former lamentation for their civil death had a comfort answerable to *that*. Let us see what analogy and proportion the sorrow and joy in one case bear to the sorrow and joy in the other.

There is no need to shock your feelings, by endeavouring to draw a picture at large of this day's most abominable massacre. Suffice it to say, that the bloody murder of children, in their tenderest and most helpless estate, torn from the arms, and butchered, in such multitudes, before the eyes of their mothers, must again cause "a voice to be heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning;" great, beyond the conception of any, but those who then expressed, or were witnesses to it. We cannot read the words which describe it, without imagining that we hear Rachel, called from her tomb near Bethlehem, "weeping for her children;" that we see her turning away, and "refusing to be comforted for her children, because they were not;" because they were departed hence, and were no more to be found in the land of the living; they were led away into that other captivity, more wretched and durable than the captivity of Benjamin, with Judah, in Babylon; they were deprived of light and life; they were hurried from the warm and cheerful precincts of day, to be imprisoned in the cold and dark dominions of the king of terrors. And who can bring them from thence? Not the high priest Joshua, the son of Josedek; not Zorobabel, who conducted their fathers from captivity; not Samson, though, in the prime of his strength, he carried away the gates of Gaza; not David, nor their father Benjamin, though both had been alive to command, or lead the whole posterity of Israel. All these might have said of the sons of Rachel, this day commemorated by us, as David did of his child, "We shall go to them,

but they shall not return to us." But the holiest of the ancient priests and prophets, the mightiest among the ancient kings and rulers, were still subject to death, and had taken their last repose with the beggar in the dust. Where then is the wonted promise of Rachel's reward? Who shall comfort her in this calamity?

Nothing, certainly, can wear a more gloomy and comfortless aspect, than things here seem to do. Yet in this, as in the former instance, "Thus saith the Lord" to the mourner, and who else can say it?—"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy; and there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

Recollecting what hath been said above, and bearing in mind the circumstances of time and place, pointed out in the application made of the former part of the passage by St. Matthew, we may suppose this latter part to speak to the Bethlehemish mothers, in some such manner as the following—At Bethlehem, the birth place of Benjamin, where the pillar was erected over Rachel's grave, a child is born, who has caused the children of Benjamin and Judah once more to become *Benoni's*, true *sons of sorrow* to their mothers; a character he himself is to sustain on earth, insomuch, that "a sword shall pierce through the soul" of her that bare him. As the seed of the woman, and with regard to the nature derived from her, he is to be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." But, like *Benjamin*, from his Father he shall receive a name expressive of far different things; "a name above every name;" he shall be exalted from misery and mortality to "the *right hand* of the majesty in the heavens;" there to take possession of an inheritance in the true land of promise. Of this his inheritance, in a state of power and glory, he will not fail to make those partakers, whose blood has been shed, by the executioners of Herod, on his account. Look upon this their final deliverance and restoration, as it is delineated in that map, or chart of it, the deliverance of your ancestors from the Babylonish captivity, and their restoration to their own land. Call to mind what was said by them, at that time, on the ground of their own happy experience.—"They that sow in tears,



shall reap in joy ; he that goeth forth, and weepeth," as if, ignorant of the art of husbandry, he feared the corn he was sowing would perish in the earth, "shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him." The heavens, echoing with your cries, and the earth, moistened with your tears, are witnesses to men and angels, that you have more plentifully sowed in grief than your ancestors. As the sorrows of your seedtime have abounded, so the joys of your harvest shall superabound. The Lord's promise of old is not yet expired, but extends, in full force, to you and yours. With what more precious seed could the land of Judah and Benjamin be sown, than the blood of tender infants, harmless and undefiled even in thought ? Scattered upon the ground by cruel hands, it shall be gathered by the power of him, who dispenseth the breath of life to all things living. None of this seed shall be lost, or prove unfruitful. Every grain shall produce its ear, and every ear its proportion of incorruptible and pleasant fruit. Great, therefore, as your affliction is allowed to be, yet mourn not as they that have no hope, but, even in the midst of your bitter complaints, still remember, that Rachel's pains must have a joyful recompense, and her exceeding sorrows portend extraordinary comforts in the issue. Only let patience have its perfect work, through faith, and that "work shall be rewarded" with the possession of the promises. For, through the Saviour who is born, "there is hope in the end," that, like as your fathers, in God's good time, "came again from the land of the enemy to their own border," so your children, whose untimely excision you lament, shall come again from the strong holds of the grave, whither they have been led away captive, to the lot of their inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, and the new Jerusalem, there to live and reign with him, for whom they have now suffered and died. *These* children of Judah and Benjamin, like their progenitors, "shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head ; they, and you with them, shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall again flee away.

The words, thus explained, will suggest to us some useful reflections, suitable to the festival, on the case of the slaughtered *infants*, and that of the lamenting *mothers*.

With regard to the *infants*, we may observe the choice, made by the church, of proper persons to attend the blessed

Jesus upon the commemoration of his birth. These are St. Stephen, St. John, and the Innocents. He was born to suffer; and therefore, the festival of his nativity is immediately followed by the festivals of those who suffered for him. St. Stephen was a martyr, and the first martyr, both in will and in deed: St. John, the beloved disciple, was such in will, but not in deed, being miraculously preserved from the death intended for him by Domitian. The Innocents were martyrs in deed, but not in will, by reason of their tender age.

Of these last, however, it pleased the Prince of martyrs to have his train composed, when he made his entry into the world, as at this season; a train of infants, suited to an infant Saviour; a train of innocents, meet to follow the spotless Lamb, who came to convince the world of sin, and to redeem it in righteousness. They were the first fruits offered to the Son of God, after his incarnation, and their blood the first that flowed on his account. They appeared as so many champions in the field, clad in the King's coat of armour, to intercept the blows directed against him.

The Christian poet, Prudentius, in one of his hymns, has an elegant and beautiful address to these young sufferers for their Redeemer—

Salvete, flores Martyrum,  
Quos, lucis ipso in limine,  
Christi insecutor sustulit,  
Ceu turbo nascentes rosas.  
Vos, prima Christi victima,  
Grex immolatorum tener,  
Aram ante ipsam, simplices,  
Palmâ et coronis luditis.

“Hail ye first flowers of the evangelical spring, cut off by the sword of persecution, ere yet you had unfolded your leaves to the morning, as the early rose droops before the withering blast. Driven, like a flock of lambs to the slaughter, you have the honour to compose the first sacrifice offered at the altar of Christ; before which, methinks I see your innocent simplicity sporting with the palms and the crowns held out to you from above.”

So remarkable an event necessarily attracts our attention to that age, which is proposed by our Lord, as, in many respects, a model for us all to copy, in forming our tempers and dispositions.—“They brought young children to Christ, that he should touch them, and his disciples rebuked those that

brought them. But Jesus was much displeased, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." And again, when the disciples "asked him, who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he took a little child, and set him in the midst, and said, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God." To be fit for the inheritance of the saints in light, we must put off the passions which are too apt to infest us as *men*, ambition, pride, craft, envy, hatred, malice, anger, revenge, covetousness, and concupiscence of every sort, and put on their opposites, humility, meekness, modesty, charity, purity, simplicity; we must become such in heart and mind, by the discipline of religion, as little children are by their age; possessed of the same unlimited confidence in the care of a Father, who, as we are assured, careth for us; looking up to him for all we want, and flying to him for protection from all we fear; never entertaining a suspicion of our being forsaken, or neglected by him, nor the least inclination to resist his will; equally insensible to the promises and threatenings of the world; resigned so suffer, and not afraid to die, when we are called so to do; able to smile at the drawn dagger, and ready to embrace the arm that aims it at our heart.

This idea of a child of God was daily realized, to the admiration of the whole pagan world, in the first ages of the church. The same inexhaustible and all powerful grace will realize it in these latter days, when religion shall be considered by us as an art, rather than a science; when *non magna loquimur sed vivimus*, shall be the device adopted by the Christian philosopher; and the precepts of the gospel shall be practised with as much diligence as that with which its evidences are studied.

And, lo, for our encouragement, in the portion of scripture this day appointed for the epistle, the veil is rent which separates the two worlds; the prospect is opened into another system; the "holiest of all" is disclosed; the celestial mount is discovered; and on its summit "we see a Lamb stand, with an hundred and forty-four thousand," of the like sweet and innocent disposition, "having his Father's name written on their foreheads. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto

God and the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they were without fault before the throne of God." From their station they beckon us after them, showing us, for our instruction and direction in the way, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

And now, we are ready, perhaps, to say, with St. Peter, on an occasion somewhat similar, It is good for us to be here ! let us make our abode on the mount ! But the time is not yet. We must return, and conclude, as we began, with the lamenting *mothers*, whom we left behind us, in the valley of tears.

Their cries, like those of Rachel, portending the birth of a *Benoni*, a *son of sorrow*, teach us, his disciples, to expect sorrow for our portion in this life, and to look forward to another for comfort and joy.

In the world, as in Rama, "a voice is heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning." Earthly possessions and satisfactions, of every sort, are, by their nature, transient. They *may* leave us ; we *must* leave them. To him who views them, in their most settled state, with the eye of wisdom, they appear, as the air in the calmest day does to the philosopher through his telescope, ever undulating and fluctuating. If we place our happiness in them, we build upon the wave. It rolls from under us, and we sink into the depths of grief and despondency.

Children, relations, friends, honours, houses, lands, revenues, and endowments, the goods of nature and of fortune, nay, even of grace itself, are only *lent*. It is our misfortune to fancy they are *given*. We start, therefore, and are angry, when the loan is called in. We think ourselves *masters*, when we are but *stewards* ; and forget, that to each of us will it one day be said, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou must be no longer steward."

Youth dreams of joys unremitted, and pleasures uninterrupted ; and sees not in the charming perspective the cross accidents that lie in wait to prevent their being so. But should no such accidents for a while intervene, to disturb the pleasing vision, age will certainly awake, and find it an end. The scythe of time will be as effectual, though not so expeditious, as the sword of the persecutor ; and without a Herod, Rachel, if she live long, will be heard lamenting ; she will experience sorrows, in which the world



can administer no adequate comfort. She must therefore look beyond it.

The patriarchs and people of God, in old time, were often delivered from adversity. They often enjoyed prosperity. But after all the wonders wrought for them, and all the blessings conferred upon them, the issue of things was still the same. These friends and favourites of heaven still saw their relations, frequently their children, falling around them, and at length dropped, themselves, into the grave, to be mourned over by those that survived them. This was the case even in the land of promise itself. Deplorable indeed, therefore, and desperate, like the worst of the heathen, would have been their condition, had they not been taught, through temporal deliverances, and temporal prosperity, in a temporal land of promise, to contemplate another deliverance from the power of the destroyer, another prosperity that should have no end, in another land of promise, which should never be taken from them, and from which they should never be taken; where they, their parents, and their children, should meet again, to part no more. What else is "the hope of Israel," what else can it be, but a "resurrection from the dead?"\*

Nothing can be plainer than the words of the apostle on this subject. Having enumerated the ancient worthies, from Abel to David, and the succeeding prophets, he thus concludes;—"These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise,"†—THE promise, emphatically, the grand promise, in faith of which they died, and of which all other promises were only shadows, and known by them to be such; "God having" all along foreseen and "provided some better thing for us;" better than any of those figurative promises which they did receive; to wit, an eternal redemption, and an eternal inheritance; that, in such eternal redemption and inheritance, "they, without us, should not be made perfect,"‡ as God intends that we, together with them, at the general resurrection, shall be made perfect in heaven.

If, then, the mothers in Judah and Benjamin had been properly instructed in the faith of the ancient church, when Jeremiah addressed to them the words we have been con-

\* Acts xxiv. 15. xxvi. 6. xxvii. 20.

† Την επαγγελίαν.

‡ Heb. xi. 40.

sidering, though they must understand them immediately as a promise that their children should be delivered from Babylon, and brought back again to their own land; yet their thoughts would naturally be carried on, for further comfort, to that other deliverance and restoration from death, promised by all the holy prophets, since the world began; even as we may presume the thoughts of a Christian parent would now be, whose son was a slave in Barbary, should a prophet be sent to him, with the following message from God; "Your son is gone into captivity, but he shall certainly be redeemed from it."

This, however, is indisputable; that in the application which St. Matthew has taught us to make of the passage, it can admit of no other construction; because there can be no deliverance from bodily death, but by a bodily resurrection.

Learn we, therefore, and a more important and useful lesson cannot be learned—whenever death deprives us of those who are near and dear to us, to comfort ourselves and one another with these words; and let each of us, as occasion for consolation shall offer itself, listen to Jeremiah's prophecy, as if it were spoken to himself;—"Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children," thy relations, or thy friends, "shall come again to their own border;" that from the dark and desolate regions of the grave they shall come to the light and glory of the heavenly Jerusalem; where, as holy John tells us, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying;"\* where Rachel shall finally cease her lamentations, lay aside her mourning veil, and wipe away all tears for ever from her eyes.

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\* Rev. xxi. 4.

## DISCOURSE XI.

## THE CIRCUMCISION.

*And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.—Luke ii. 21.*

THESE words conclude the gospel for the day, taken from a chapter which hath afforded ample matter of wonder and delight through the course of the present joyful season, when the church, like the blessed virgin mother, is never seen but with the holy child in her arms. By the portions already selected from it, we have been made to listen to the sermon preached by an angel upon the subject of the nativity; and the sweet notes of that anthem, sung by the choir of heaven immediately after, are still sounding in our ears. With the happy and obedient shepherds we have been at Bethlehem, and there have seen “this great thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us;” and have found reason to return, like them, “glorifying and praising God for all the things that we have heard and seen, as it was told unto us.” Nor shall we ever forget, it is to be hoped (at least, never at this hallowed and gracious time), to imitate her example, who “kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart.”

We are now conducted from the birth to the circumcision of our Redeemer, an account of which immediately follows the history of the shepherds, in the words of the text. And very meet, and right, and our bounden duty it is, that we should at this time, and in this place, employ our thoughts upon it; seeing it was the beginning of sorrows to the Son of God, and the beginning of joy, because the beginning of redemption, to the sons of men, for whom the first blood of the all-propitiating victim was now shed. A stumbling-block it may prove to the Jew, foolishness it may appear to the Greek, and to all those, who, like the one, desire a *sign*

of earthly splendour and magnificence, or, like the other, seek after the *wisdom* of false philosophy : but to the intelligent, and therefore humble believer, Christ, in this state of weakness, pain, and sorrow, is “ the wisdom of God ” to contrive, “ and the power of God ” to effect the deliverance of his people.

It is observable, that whensoever, in the scriptures, mention is made of any particular relative to the abasement, the infirmity, and the shame, submitted to by Christ, it is presently contrasted by something concerning his exaltation, his power, and his glory ; that so, the objection arising in the mind from a view of the former, may be obviated at once by the consideration of the latter, and the Christian may never lose sight of that capital article of his faith, the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of his Saviour. Thus we behold him in swaddling clothes ; but instantly we hear the heavenly host singing an Hallelujah to him. He lies in a manger ; but the brightest star in the firmament points the way to his abode. He expires upon the cross ; but all nature suffers with him, almost to a dissolution. And thus, in the instance now before us, he is circumcised indeed on earth, as the son of Abraham ; but a name is given him from heaven, as the Son of God. For in these lowly and ignominious circumstances, he receives the name enjoined before to be imposed on him by the angel ; a name above every name ; a name which evil spirits fear, and good ones adore ; a name, at which every knee should rejoice to bow, and which every tongue should exult to confess ; since it is by this name that glory is given to God in the highest, peace restored to earth, at war with its Maker, and good will streams forth to sinful men.

In order to unfold the mystery of the circumcision of Christ, it will be necessary to inquire into the institution of this rite, with the reason and end thereof.—“ Moses (saith our Lord to the Jews) gave you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers ; ” \* this being one of the many legal ceremonies which were originally communicated to the ancient patriarchs, and afterward re-ordained in writing by Moses. The first account of it occurs in the history of our father Abraham ; and St. Paul, discoursing at large upon the point, † informeth us, that it was given as a

\* John vii. 32.

† Rom. iv.



“sign, or seal of the righteousness, which is by faith.” Now the object of Abraham’s faith was redemption by the promised Seed, that is to say, by Messiah, who should spring from his loins; and in whom, by reason of that redemption, “all the nations of the earth were to be blessed” with the blessings of eternity. And the *righteousness*, which is by such faith, consisteth in the justification of believers by the cutting off and doing away the body of sin through the sacrifice of Christ, by which they are pardoned and made holy, being separated from sin, and sin from them, in order to a final separation from every thing that offendeth, at the resurrection of the just. This is “the righteousness of faith,” with which Abraham having been before invested, he received circumcision, not as any thing which could make him righteous, but as a *sign* and *seal* of that evangelical righteousness, “which he had, being yet uncircumcised; to the end that he might be the father of all them who believe, though they be not circumcised;” and that we Gentiles, as well as the Jews, might become the children, and inherit the blessing of Abraham. But from the institution of this rite to the manifestation of the promised Seed, it became to the natural descendants of the patriarch Abraham, what baptism hath been ever since to the spiritual progeny of him, who is, in a much higher sense, *the father of us all*; it became the sacrament of initiation into the true church and faith. Now, in a sacrament, the outward and visible sign is intended to introduce us to the inward and spiritual grace, figured by it as a *sign*, conveyed by it as a *means*, and insured by it as a *pledge*. And what the inward and spiritual grace signified by circumcision was, not only St. Paul, but Moses himself will tell us, who, in the book of Deuteronomy, expresseth himself in these terms; “Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.”\* And again; “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”† From these passages laid together, the following truths seem to be fairly deducible; namely, first, That circumcision was an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, to be wrought in the *heart*: secondly, That this inward and

\* Deut. x. 16.

† Deut. xxx. 6.

spiritual grace was the cutting off and casting away *sin* : thirdly, That for this work they were not sufficient as of themselves, but their sufficiency was *of the Lord their God*, who would work in them, and with them, through faith, by the Holy Spirit : fourthly, That the effect and consequence of this spiritual circumcision would be the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, with its genuine fruit of unfeigned obedience to his commandments : and, lastly, That this would prepare the way to eternal life ;—" that thou mayest LIVE," saith Moses ; " that thou mayest live," not only on earth, under grace, but hereafter in glory : since " purification of the heart" is in order to a better life in that celestial Canaan, the ultimate end of all the promises, that good land which the Lord our God shall give to every Israelite indeed, and in which he himself, after having been the " shield" of Abraham and his seed, shall be their " exceeding great reward."\* And so it is written ;—" Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."† Thus do these two texts from the writings of Moses involve in them the substance of the gospel ; they begin with the cleansing of the heart from sin, thence proceeding on to the love of God, till they terminate in the beatific vision of him in an endless life. And could the Jews have read their law, without that veil which infidelity had drawn over the eyes of their understanding ; could they have beheld, with open face, the glory of the Lord, enshrined in the Mosaic mysteries ; could they have discerned the " apple of gold" through the " network of silver,"‡ instead of mistaking the casket for the jewel which it contained and preserved ; they had then saved an apostle the trouble of informing them, that " he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."§

We will venture then to suppose, that the institution of the rite now before us, with the reason and end thereof, is sufficiently cleared, and circumcision proved to be a sacramental sign of the cutting off and casting away sin from the heart. But what mean ye then, as saith St. Bernard, by circumcising the child Jesus, who did no sin, and knew

\* Gen. xv. 1.    † Matt. v. 8.    ‡ Prov. xxv. 11.    § Rom. ii. 28.

none; who was conceived in the womb of a virgin, by the Spirit of eternal purity; why must he undergo this painful ceremony? To this we answer, besides the example of humility and obedience herein afforded us by our Lord; as also the proof from hence resulting of the reality of his human nature; besides these collateral considerations, I say, the reason why Christ was, as on this day, circumcised, is the same with the reason why he was born, why he lived, and why he died. What he did, and what he suffered, he did and suffered not for himself, but for us. The whole of this momentous and salutary truth is expressed by the apostle in those few words;—"He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him."\* He bore our griefs, that we might enter into his joy: he put on the bloody garment of sin and death, that we might be invested with the white and spotless robes of righteousness and life. He became not only one *with* us, as the head is with the members, but one *for* us, or in our *stead*, as a surety is for a debtor. And therefore, though, as the all perfect Son of God, he could need neither circumcision nor baptism, yet, as the suffering representative of fallen human nature, he submitted to both, with the same view, namely, "to fulfil all righteousness." This was the argument he used to John, in the case of his baptism, and it holdeth equally in that of his circumcision. For having once undertaken to appear as our surety and substitute, it became incumbent on him "to fulfil all righteousness," to perform what we should have performed, and to suffer for what we did not perform. As the children, therefore, were compounded of flesh and blood, he partook of the same; he was "made of a woman;" as they were circumcised, he was circumcised also; he was "made under the law."† And indeed, it had profited us nothing, that he was made of a woman, had he not likewise been "made under the law;" for then the law could never have apprehended him; the law, with its penalties, having no concern with a person, who, like him, was not an offender against it. For "the law was not made for the righteous, but for the lawless and disobedient."‡ We are the transgressors, the debtors, whose bond was forfeited, and "the handwriting of condemnation" standing in full force against us. But Christ, by sub

\* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† Gal. iv. 4.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 9.

mitting to the act of circumcision, voluntarily put himself under the law, and took the whole burden of it, as he did the cross, upon his own shoulders: since it is an axiom in theology, that “if any man be circumcised, he is a debtor to do the whole law.”\* Christ, therefore, by being *circumcised*, became that *debtor*, and entered into covenant anew, as man’s surety, to pay the uttermost farthing. But the debt was not a pecuniary one. The law was capital, and death the penalty incurred by the breach of it. Life was the debt due from us, and paid by Christ to the justice of heaven. And, therefore, when he took upon himself the obligation of paying it, which was as at this time, the covenant was made in the body of his flesh, and signed with his precious blood; to show that in him, now “made sin for us,” the body of sin was to be cut off and destroyed; that the curse of the law had seized on him as the malefactor (for such he vouchsafed to be accounted, and among such he did not disdain to be numbered), and that his disciples, who were really malefactors, might therefore “go their way”† free; the blood now shed being an earnest, that in due time he would shed the whole, and make his human nature an offering for sin. This he did upon the cross, when he paid indeed the uttermost farthing that the law itself could demand, and so fulfilled all justice; thereby “cancelling the handwriting of ordinances, taking it out of the way, and nailing it to his cross,”‡ never more to appear in judgment against us. And, accordingly, to our great and endless comfort, it is declared from the apostolical chair, that “there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”§

The way, therefore, is now open for us to proceed to a consideration of the imposition of the name *JESUS*, at the time of circumcision. For then it was, that Christ laid himself under the obligation to *SAVE*, and began to answer to that sacred and glorious name. From the very moment in which a sufficient surety appears, and becomes responsible for the debt, “deliver the man,” saith the creditor, “I have found a ransom.”|| The greatness of the deliverance may be estimated by the value of the ransom; and, reciprocally, the value of the ransom by the greatness of the deliverance. The ransom was the dear and only Son of God; the deliver-

\* Gal. v. 3.

† John xviii. 8.

‡ Col. ii. 14.

§ Rom. v. 1.

|| Job xxxiii. 24.



ance was a deliverance from all the terrors of angry and avenging heaven. “The law worketh wrath;” \* because it condemneth the transgressors thereof, that is, without the intervention of the evangelical covenant of repentance, it condemneth every child of Adam; seeing that, according to the conclusion fairly deduced by the same apostle from undeniable premises, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” †

But who shall express, or conceive, adequate ideas of that condemnation from which Christ hath delivered us; of that wrath, which the law worketh against every man, who shall have no surety to appear for him, in the day when God shall come to require an account? As far, indeed, as the elements of nature can display to human sense the terrible majesty of their great Creator; as far as his eternal power and godhead can be manifested to the sons of earth by the things that are made; so far did it once please God to manifest and display them; and that, upon an occasion, which evidently pointeth out to us his intention in so doing. The occasion I mean, was the giving of the law, the circumstances of which are presumed to be the best and fullest comment upon the apostolical text before cited;—“The law worketh wrath.”

Let imagination, therefore, place us for a few minutes at the foot of Sinai, where every man must place himself, who would form an estimate of the salvation wrought for him by Jesus Christ. We shall find the mountain carefully fenced about, and guarded by this awful prohibition;—“Charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many of them perish.—For, if so much as a beast touch the mountain, he shall be stoned, or struck through with a dart. Take heed to yourselves, therefore, stand at the nether part of the mount.” ‡ There then let us take our station, and behold a thick cloud, blackness of darkness, settling upon the mountain, and diffusing itself around; in the midst of this most horrible night, the flame of devouring fire rolling forth in dreadful waves, and burning to the midst of heaven; lightnings every moment issuing from it, and breaking through the surrounding gloom; the air incessantly thundering from every quarter; and, above all, the voice of a trumpet piercing the heavens, sounding long, and waxing louder and louder; the mountain smoking like a furnace,

\* Rom. iv. 15.

† Rom. iii. 23.

‡ Exod. xix. 12. 17. 21.

and quaking greatly from its foundations; all the people in the camp trembling and dying for fear: nay, "so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake."\* And if Moses, who, as the figure of him that should come, had the honour to be a mediator between an offended God and his offending people, if he exceedingly feared and quaked at this terrible sight, what must be the state of the careless sinner, who having incurred all this heavy displeasure, nor ever employed an hour in meditating his escape, shall be suddenly called upon by death to meet it all, unprepared? And who is there among us that thinks himself prepared to meet his God, as he appeared upon Mount Sinai? Let the experiment be made only in an ordinary tempest of thunder and lightning. No sooner is that glorious voice of Jehovah heard in the heavens, but the earth trembles, and is still. "Hear attentively," saith Elihu, in Job, "the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning to the ends of the earth. At this my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place."† What sensations then would be produced in the hearts even of the best of men by a manifestation like that at Sinai? And if the righteous scarcely sustain it, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Nor let any man think himself unconcerned in that scene, because it is past. The terrors of Mount Sinai are still in force against every one who is not found in Christ Jesus; unless we suppose that the despisers of the gospel will fare better than the contemners of the law, and not rather be thought worthy of much sorer punishment. The hour is coming, when our eyes shall see more amazing sights, and our ears shall hear more terrifying sounds, than were seen and heard by the house of Israel in the wilderness. For yet a little while, and the same God who was revealed from heaven in flaming fire to give the law, shall again be revealed from heaven in flaming fire to inquire how it hath been observed, and to take vengeance on those who have not secured unto themselves a sponsor to stand in the gap for them. So that, although the things seen and heard at Mount Sinai did not affect us, yet the argument enlarged upon by the apostle, Heb. xii. undoubtedly doth; namely,

\* Heb. xii. 21.

† Job xxxvii. 1—3.

that if the law was so terrible, when enacted, how much more terrible must it be, when required at our hands by God, coming in glorious majesty to judge the world? Then shall there be blackness of darkness, not for a time, but for ever; then shall the lightnings of Sinai be extended over all the earth, and a fire be kindled which shall not be quenched; then shall the heavens pass away with the noise of a great and intolerable thunder; a far louder trumpet shall then not only pierce the ears of the living, but also sound an alarm through all the regions of the grave, and awaken those who shall have slept for ages in the dust; then he whose voice formerly shook the earth, shall fulfil his promise,—“ Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven;” \* both of which shall be removed, and their place no more be found; then shall all the tribes of the earth, as well as those of Israel, tremble, and mourn, and wail; and who, where is he, that thinketh he shall not then find cause to say with Moses, “ So terrible is the sight, that I exceedingly fear and quake!”

Such, therefore, is the wrath which the law worketh, and such is the condemnation of that “ handwriting against us,” from which our dear Master and Redeemer, as at this time, the time of his circumcision, engaged to rescue all who should believe in him. Then it was that he took upon himself the law, and the penalty annexed to the breach of it, being (as an apostle has expressed it) “ made a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse of the law;” † that is, to deliver us from the black darkness of sin and death; from the thunders and lightnings of the Father’s vengeance; from the dread of the trumpet of eternal judgment; the dissolution and destruction of the world; the words of condemnation, and the unextinguishable flame: and having delivered us from all these terrors, to introduce us to a far different scene of things; to the light of righteousness and immortality; to the peace and love of God; to the still small voice of evangelical grace; to the harps of angels, and the music of hallelujahs; to the final sentence of absolution,—“ Come, ye blessed;” to a kingdom that cannot be moved; to the joys of heaven, and the glories of eternity. “ For we are not come unto the mount that might be touched (the palpable, material mount), that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and

\* Heb. xii. 26.

† Gal. iii. 13.

tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice, they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more (for they could not endure that which was commanded—and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake). But we are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel;”\* the one crying as loud for mercy, as the other did for vengeance. And, therefore, when this blood of sprinkling was first shed, “when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel, before he was conceived in the womb, saying, Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall SAVE his people from their sins.”†

The doctrine of the day being thus stated and explicated, nothing remains, but that we reduce it to practice. Something Christ hath left us, in every mystery, to believe and to admire; something also to love and to imitate. The legal ceremony of circumcision, having received its accomplishment in Jesus, became of course null and void; insomuch, that the performance of it afterward was justly deemed a renunciation of Christ, a denial of his advent in the flesh; for so the apostle witnesseth;—“Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.”‡ This is the unhappy case of the Jews to this day; who, having lost the evangelical faith of their fathers, still continue under the law, with all its judgments in force against them; and this must be their case, until their heart shall turn to the Lord their God, until they shall be led to acknowledge the holy Jesus, as the end of the law, and the Saviour of the world. In the mean time, by us who believe, the doctrine is to be transmitted from the head to the heart, there, by the operation of the eternal Spirit, to do away what St. James styeth—“the superfluity of malicious-

\* Heb. xii. 18, &amp;c.

† Matt. i. 21.

‡ Gal. v. 2.



ness,"\* cleansing us from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God. It is true, that sin was mystically cut off, and destroyed, in the body of Christ; but wherefore? That it might live and flourish in us?—God forbid. Christ was made sin for us, not that we might continue in sin, but that we might become the righteousness of God in him. For, if we be dead to sin in Christ our representative, how can we, consistently with our profession, live any longer therein? How can the circumcision of Christ profit any one, who celebrates the festival as constantly as it returns, himself still continuing "uncircumcised in heart and ears?" Or, in other words, how can his baptism save him, whose life is one perpetual renunciation of it? For baptism, which succeeded in the place of circumcision, takes up the mystery, where that left it. The one showeth sin cut off, in and with the body of Christ; the other representeth it as buried in his grave, and the new man, through the power of his resurrection, risen again, without sin, unto salvation. And one cannot but admire the manner in which St. Paul hath interwoven the spiritual application of these two sacraments of the old and new law.—"Ye are complete (saith he to his Colossians) in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead: and you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened, together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."† We are to labour, therefore, after the spirit and power of these two sacraments in our hearts, that they may be manifested in our lives and conversations. Otherwise, the letter of them can only condemn us. For as he is not a Jew, so neither is he a Christian, who is one outwardly; but he is a true Jew, and he is a true Christian, who is so inwardly; from whose heart and members the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are cut off; who is dead and buried to sin, and risen again to righteousness. This blessed work, sacramentally shown forth and begun in baptism, is to be continued through life by the

\* Περισσιαν κακιας—James i. 21.

† Col. ii. 10.

successive renovations of repentance, by daily accessions of knowledge, faith, and charity, producing and carrying on a gradual growth in grace, until it be perfected. And, as the season annually returns, when it pleaseth God to begin again his work, which men so often behold, of renewing the face of the earth, by commanding the sun to revisit and cheer our world, where nature, during his absence, hath drooped and languished away, but is again to be raised from the death and deformity of winter, to the life and beauty of spring, until, by a silent, progressive operation, the year be crowned with the loving-kindness of the Lord; are we not hereby directed to look up, by faith, to the great luminary of the intellectual world, who declareth from his glorious throne,—“Behold, I make all things new;” \* beseeching him to arise upon us with healing in his wings; to visit us with the light of his countenance, and the joy of his salvation, that so old things may pass away, and we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds; to disperse the clouds and darkness of ignorance; to lay the wintry storms and tempests of disordered passions, and introduce into our hearts the calm and gladsome spring of everlasting righteousness and peace; to pour upon the year all the blessings of that glorious festival, with which it commenceth; and, in one word, by making it HOLY, to make it happy.

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## DISCOURSE XII.

### THE EPIPHANY.

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*Now, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*—Matt. ii. 1, 2.

IN this remarkable part of sacred story there are two particulars, on which, at the present season, we are called upon

\* Rev. xxi. 5.

to employ our meditations. And as they will suggest ample matter for that purpose, I shall crave your leave to enter upon a discussion of them, without any farther preface.

The particulars are these:—

First. The *persons* here mentioned by St. Matthew.

Secondly. Their *journey*.

First, then, Let us contemplate the *persons* here mentioned by St. Matthew, their *country*, and *condition*.

With regard to their *country*, the text gives us no farther information, than that they came from *the east*. Of the ancient expositors, some mention Chaldea, others Persia; but others, among whom are Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Epiphanius, with more probability, perhaps, assign Arabia Felix, a country less distant from Judea, and lying to the south-east of it; the same country pointed out by the Psalmist, when, predicting the accession of the Gentiles, he saith, “The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts:” the country from whence, attended by a train of camels bearing spices, came the queen of Sheba to the court of the temporary and representative PRINCE OF PEACE; the country particularly specified in the 60th chapter of Isaiah;—“All they from Sheba\* shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord:” a country remarkable, by the testimony of historians, for plenty of gold, and of the most precious aromatics: a country, in the neighbourhood of which, Balaam uttered and left behind him his famous prophecy, concerning the “Star that should arise out of Jacob.”

As to the *condition* of these eastern travellers, it is said by the evangelist, they were *Magoi*; a term then applied, among all the nations of the east, in its primary and good sense, to those who gave themselves up to the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, by all the means in their power. They were the great mathematicians, philosophers, and divines of the ages in which they lived, and had no other knowledge but that which, by their own study, and the instructions of the ancients of their sect, they had attained unto. But as their credit in the world, on these accounts, was so great, that a learned man and a magian became

\* Sabæa—extrema Arabiæ Felicis regio, Persico sinui proxima.—*Vitringa* in loc.

equivalent terms, the vulgar, looking on their knowledge to be more than natural, entertained an opinion of them, as if they had been actuated and inspired by supernatural powers, in the same manner as has too frequently happened, at other times, and in other places. In the number of these magi, or learned men of old, persons not only of noble, but of royal extraction, often thought proper to enlist themselves. Many, therefore, have imagined these magi to have been such; and the supposition, all circumstances considered, is not improbable.

But the particular, of which we are certain, in which we are chiefly interested, and which, at this time, claims our attention, is, that they were *Gentiles*, aliens, by nature, like ourselves, from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise.

In the family of Noah, the true religion was universal, or catholic. It continued to be so till the days of Abraham, when the general apostacy of the nations to idolatry, made it necessary that a family should be called forth, and separated from the pollution that was in the world, to be the happy instrument of preserving faith upon earth, "till the seed should come to whom the promise was made." By this step in the divine dispensations, it was never intended to "put the candle under a bushel, but to place it on a candlestick," and there to keep it burning, that it might give light to those that were in the house, and to those who should enter into it. Many, from time to time, did enter into it; and, therefore, many more might have entered in, had it so pleased them. The transactions of God with his chosen people were not carried on in a corner; and there was no period in which he left himself without witness among the nations round about them. Let us take a cursory view of the divine proceedings, in this light only.

Of Abraham's call, the inhabitants of the country from which he was called, and, in consequence of that call, departed for ever, could not have been ignorant; and as many as were disposed to obey the admonition of heaven, might, doubtless, have had permission to attend him.

The patriarchal families, in their sojournings, travelled through many of the countries inhabited in those early ages. By the governors of those countries, we find them treated with reverence, and acknowledged to be prophets, nay,



“mighty princes of God.” The story of their divine call and destination must have been the subject of conversation, wherever they came, nor would they be backward to make it so. They would, of course, communicate to others what heaven had communicated to them. They would exhort men, as they went, to save themselves from that untoward generation. That such conversations and such exhortations were not without fruit, we may conclude from the mention that is made of “the souls which they had gotten in Haran,” or the persons they had converted, and adopted into the holy family. The behaviour of Abimelech and his subjects is very observable, and shows there was, even among *them*, a sense and fear of God, which, it is to be apprehended, we might now look for in vain, in countries calling themselves *Christian*.

The deliverance of Abrahams brother, Lot, and the unparalleled overthrow of the cities of the plain, by fire from heaven, must have been a very awakening and affecting call to all within hearing.

In process of time, we find Egypt, then the most powerful and learned of nations, opening its hospitable arms to receive the family of Jacob, having owed its preservation, in the days of dearth, to one of that family, ordained, in a wonderful manner, to save much people alive. Here the church was settled, increased, and flourished for more than three hundred years, bearing testimony to the true religion, in the eye of the world.

Let any one consider with himself the astonishing series of miracles wrought by Moses on a stage so public as this; the passage through the Red Sea; the destruction of Pharoah and his host; the march of the Israelitish army, with the divine Shechinah, or Glory, in the midst of it; the awful and tremendous appearance on Mount Sinai, at the promulgation of the law; their entrance into Canaan; the passage of Jordan; the fall of Jericho; the excision of the devoted nations;—Could all these things be done, and the rumour of them not be spread, in those days, among the nations, both those that were near, and those that were afar off?

The fame of this distinguished and extraordinary people must have increased with their conquests, till universal peace was established in the days of Solomon. To his court the princes of the earth resorted; struck with his glory, charmed with his wisdom, and desirous of being instructed by him.

Would you know the exalted sentiments entertained by them of him, and of the people over whom he presided? Listen to the queen of Sheba, speaking for them all.—“It was a true report that I heard, in mine own land, of thine acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit, I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.”\*

The mission of the prophet Jonah, to preach repentance to the inhabitants of the great city Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, is an event, which deserves a place in your considerations on the subject before us.

When the Babylonian power was at its height under Nebuchadnezzar, the people of God, for their transgressions, were carried into captivity by him. Reflect upon the very remarkable incidents to which that captivity gave birth; the interpretation of the monarch's dreams; the accomplishment of one of them, by his degradation, and subsequent restoration; the preservation of the three children in the furnace, and of Daniel in the den of lions; with the decrees, in favour of true religion, promulgated through the whole extent of that enormous empire, to which most of the kingdoms of the known world were at that time subject.

Upon the ruins of the Babylonian empire arose that of the Medes and Persians; the celebrated founder of which began his reign with the publication of a decree, for the return of God's chosen people to their own land, with leave to rebuild their city and temple.

The prosperity and felicity of Israel after their return

\* “In Solomon's time there were 153,000 proselytes in the land of Israel.”—2 Chron. ii. 17. See “Fleury's History of the Israelites,” part ii. chap. ix. p. 84. This little book contains a concise, pleasing, and just account of the *manners, customs, laws, polity, and religion* of the Israelites. It is an excellent introduction to the reading of the Old Testament, and should be put into the hands of every young person. An elegant English version of it, by Mr. Farnsworth, dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury, was printed in 1756, for Whiston, White, and Baldwin.

from Babylon; the interview between the high priest and Alexander, when upon his march to the conquest of Persia, as it stands recorded by Josephus; the well known exploits of the Maccabees against Antiochus; the connexion formed, about that period, between the Jews and the Romans; the translation of the scriptures into Greek, and the universal expectation produced thereby among the nations, of a ruler that should come out of Judea—All these considerations, though perhaps they are suffered, in the course of our reading, to glide by us unobserved as they occur separately, and unconnected with each other, yet when they are thrown together, and duly weighed, may serve greatly to assist us in forming our judgment concerning the state of the Gentiles, and the testimony from time to time born to the true religion, by the then church of God in the heathen world.\* Notwithstanding the light heaven has been pleased to manifest, whether in former or in latter times, many, both individuals and nations, have still continued to sit in darkness, and the shadow of death. The fate of such it is not our business to determine. One thing we know,—and more we cannot, more we need not know;—that in the last great day, when that point and all others shall be finally settled, He is to settle them, who, before men and angels, “will be justified in his saying, and clear when he is judged.” What mercy can do, mercy will do. All iniquity shall then stop her mouth, and no person that shall be condemned, will have power or reason to complain. To the curiosity, which, negligent of its own interest in Christ, is ever anxiously inquiring into the future destination of those who never heard of him, the proper answer, surely, is—“What is that to thee? Follow thou me.”

That the Jew, with the scriptures in his hands, should be blind to the counsels of God respecting the Gentiles, and their return to the church, is indeed truly marvellous. It was foretold, that the posterity of Japheth should one day “dwell in the tents of Shem;”† that in the promised seed of Abraham “all the nations of the earth should be blessed;”‡ that to

\* The reader will find many curious and valuable observations upon this important and interesting subject, in the Bishop of Carlisle’s “Theory of Religion,” part ii.; as also in a Dissertation of Dr. Waterland, subjoined to “Scripture Vindicated.”

† Gen. ix. 27.

‡ Gen. xii. 3.

Shiloh should "the gathering of the nations be."\* Isaiah is very express, and saith, "There shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.† It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the ends of the earth.‡ Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."§ No less clear are several passages in the Psalms, which never failed to make a part of the synagogue service. — "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him.|| The princes of the nations shall be joined to the people of the God of Abraham.¶ Praise the Lord all ye heathen, praise him all ye nations; for his merciful kindness is ever more and more toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever."\*\*

The event, which bore so capital a share in the gracious designs of the Almighty, which was thus predicted, and celebrated before hand, by patriarchs and prophets, began, as at this season, to take place, by the coming of the eastern sages to Bethlehem, in the name of us all, as representatives of the heathen world. They were the first fruits of that glorious harvest, afterward reaped and gathered by the apostles and their successors; they were the standard bearers of that noble army, which, from the four quarters of the globe, hath since marched into the church, through the gates mercifully thrown open to admit them. From the consideration of the

\* Gen. xlix. 10.

§ Isa. lx. 1, &c.

† Isa. xi. 10.

|| Ps. xxii. 27.

\*\* Ps. cxvii.

‡ Isa. xlix. 6.

¶ Ps. xlvii. 9.



persons mentioned in the text, we proceed therefore to consider;—

Secondly, their *journey*; the *occasion*, and the *end* of it;—  
 “They came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

The birth of Christ was first revealed to the shepherds, who were Jews. For that purpose, the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and the *glory* of the Lord shone round about them; a proper intimation of *his* appearance, at the brightness of whose rising on the intellectual world, darkness was to vanish, and the shadows fly away. A sign of the same import was vouchsafed to the Gentiles, as their conductor to the new born Redeemer of mankind.—“A *star*, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.”

I shall not take up your time in proposing conjectures on the nature and form of this star. It was undoubtedly such, as might best answer the end in view; and probably far exceeded the other stars, to appearance, in magnitude and brightness; as it notified the birth of one, who was fairer than the children of men, on whom rested the Spirit of grace and glory.

How just and how beautiful an emblem was such a star of the blessed person to whom it pointed! Celestial in its original; framed of the purest materials; admitting no dross and baseness into its composition; without spot, or the shadow of a cloud; shedding a lustre incapable of being sullied by the objects on which it fell, and passing through all things undefiled; moving above the world, though moving in it; placed in heaven, to give light upon the earth; rising in the east, but diffusing its glories to the west; the first fruits of the day, the bright and the morning star, dispelling the shades, clearing the skies, eclipsing the other luminaries, reigning alone and unrivalled in the firmament; from thence, not more bright than beneficial, exerting an influence, powerful, though silent and secret; directing and attracting men to the salvation it portended!\*

\* See these particulars beautifully expanded and enlarged upon, by the admirable Dr. South, in a discourse upon Rev. xxii. 16.—“I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”—Vol. iii. Sermon. vii.

The eastern magi, as is evident from the text, understood, before they began their journey, that the star which they saw did by its appearance indicate the birth of "the King of the Jews," that is, of the person foretold and expected, under that character, among the people of God. They understood, that this person, though styled "King of the *Jews*," would accept the oblations of the *Gentiles*, and extend to them the blessings of his reign. They understood, as it should seem, that he was more than man;—"We have seen *his* star in the east, and are come to *worship* him." By what means is it likely they should have attained this knowledge?

It is certain, that at the period when these things happened, and for some time preceding it, a general expectation of a ruler to arise in Judea prevailed all over the world. Suetonius, not to mention other historians, expressly tells us, that an ancient and uninterrupted opinion had prevailed *in all the east*, that at that time (namely, at the beginning of the last Jewish war) it was decreed by the fates, that some coming out of Judea should obtain the sovereignty. And no wonder, as a learned writer well observes, that such an opinion should be propagated throughout the east, when we consider the vast number of Jews which were spread over all the eastern countries. In the reign of Ahasuerus, or Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Jews were dispersed throughout all the provinces of the Persian monarchy, and that, in numbers sufficient to defend themselves against their enemies in those provinces; and many of the people of the land also, as we read in the book of Esther, became Jews. After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews increased so mightily, that we find them not only throughout Asia, but in Africa, and in many cities and islands of Europe, mentioned in the second chapter of the Acts. Wherever they dwelt, they made many proselytes to their religion; and in their attempts to this purpose, they must very much spread the expectation of the Messiah's coming; an article so important in itself, and so flattering to their national vanity. These opportunities of being informed of the approaching advent of the great King, the magians of the east enjoyed in common with many other people. To which it may be added, that Zoroaster, the famous reformer of the magian sect, is generally said to have been by extraction a Jew, and to have

lived as a servant with one of the prophets, probably Daniel; he was well acquainted with the writings of Moses, and has inserted in his book many particulars from them.

Now, if we suppose the minds of men, of learned men more especially, to have been in this manner prepared, and rendered attentive to what happened, the sudden appearance of a new star in the heavens, supereminent in splendour, and pointing toward Judea, might, perhaps, even without any farther information, be construed by them as a sign, that the long looked for Prince and Saviour was actually born.

If we farther suppose, that the famous prediction, delivered in the mountains of the east, by Balaam, a prophet of their own, who, having his eyes opened, saw, and mentioned, so many ages before its appearance, "the STAR that should arise out of Jacob, the sceptre that should come out of Israel;"\* if we suppose, I say, that this famous prediction was carefully preserved, and handed down from one generation to another, as would most probably be the case, it doubtless might have lent its assistance at this time, and upon this occasion.

But, after all, when we consider that every circumstance relative to the birth of Christ was, and must needs be, extraordinary and supernatural, full of wonder, and full of mystery; when we reflect on the journey and oblations of these sages, thus representing, as it were, the whole heathen world, now at length returning to the acknowledgment and adoration of its Redeemer, who should have been all along an object of faith to the nations, as well as to the Jews; why should we not conclude, that, as an angel accompanied the glory that shone round the Jewish shepherds, and proclaimed to them the nativity of Jesus, so some beneficent spirit was enjoined to communicate to these Gentile philosophers the same gracious and comfortable intelligence? This, however, we may most assuredly conclude, that he, who hung out the star in the firmament, visible to their outward eyes, took care that it should not be hung out in vain; but that some attendant light should at the same time shine inward, and irradiate their minds with the knowledge of its signification and import.

The fact is clear.—They saw, they understood, they set out. No distance, no difficulties, no dangers, were suffi-

\* Numb. xxiv. 17.

cient to deter them. They passed the rocks and sands of the deserts, "the tents of Kedar," and "the hills of the robbers." Children of the faith of Abraham, they left their own country, obeying the heavenly call. Led by the star, as the Israelites of old by the pillar of fire, they pursued their way through the wilderness to the land of promise—there to seek him, "in whom all the promises of God," made to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, "were yea and amen."

Arrived at Jerusalem, they imparted the glad tidings to those from whom they should have received them. Neither afraid of Herod, nor ashamed of Messiah, they professed openly the occasion of their journey. They believed, and therefore they spake.—"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" To you, O ye rulers and teachers in Israel, we apply ourselves. You must know the birth-place of the Redeemer. Saw ye him whom we seek? Tell us where we may find, and adore him.

Far other sentiments were excited, by this question, in the breast of Herod. Human policy would not suffer him to hear of a king, without thinking of a rival; and therefore he immediately projected a plan for the destruction of the new born Prince.

For this end, he summoned a council of the chief priests and elders, and demanded of them, where Christ should be born? Their lips were intended to preserve knowledge; and they did so. They answered, In Bethlehem of Judea; and cited their authority from the prophet Micah. They gave true information, and directed others aright, though they went not themselves. Herod inquired concerning Christ, as many do concerning his religion, in order not to revere and obey, but to oppose and destroy.

The magi, having now obtained the desired information, proceeded to Bethlehem; and, lest their ardour should be damped by any doubt, lo, the star which they saw in the east, and which, therefore, had disappeared for a time, again "went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." The sight of their original and faithful monitor cheered their spirits, dispelling every anxious and uneasy thought.—"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

When their guide had conducted them to their journey's



end, we read not that they were at all offended, or disconcerted, at the humble and lowly state in which they found the heaven-proclaimed king. The queen of Sheba came from far to hear the wisdom, and see the glory of Solomon. She accordingly heard his wisdom, and saw his glory—both beyond even her high raised expectation. These men came from far to behold the King of the Jews. But in his appearance there was neither beauty nor glory, that they should desire or admire him. They saw, they heard nothing, but signs of poverty and weakness. Great, surely, was their faith; and greater, one is tempted to think, must have been their knowledge of the divine dispensations, than we are aware of. Where the star rested, there was the person whom they had been directed to seek. They therefore entered, and adored; and the Gentiles acknowledged him, whom the Jews disowned and rejected. They offered to him the richest productions of the country from whence they came; such things as were most precious, and of highest use and signification in ornamenting and exalting the services of the temple and altar.—“All they (says Isaiah) from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and,” by so doing, “they shall show forth the praises of the Lord,”\* while they thus devote themselves and their substance to his service. And since the eastern magi, as hath been before observed, are upon this occasion to be considered by us as the delegates and deputies of the heathen world, the history of their journey and their oblations speaks the same language with that employed by St. John in the Revelation, concerning the Christian church.—“And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the gates of it shall not be shut at all; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”†

Some reflections on the subject naturally offer themselves, in the way of *application*.

And first, Let us evermore, on this returning festival, give thanks unto our Lord God for the revelation of that great mystery of mercy, the restoration of the Gentiles to the church, from which they had been, for so many ages, excluded; rather should we say, they had excluded themselves. The unhappy prodigal voluntarily left his father's house, the door of which was still open, whenever he should

\* Isa. lx. 6.

† Rev. xxi. 24.

be disposed to return and re-enter. But the time was long, ere he came to himself, and thought of being again received into the family of the faithful. No sooner was that the case, than the father, as if he had all along been looking out, in hope and expectation of his child, saw him while he was yet a great way off, ran to meet him, embraced him with a parent's tenderness, brought him into his house, made a feast for him, and commanded that no voice should be heard but that of joy and gladness, because he that had been lost was now found—he that had been dead was alive again!—"O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name: show forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens. Honour and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary!"\*

Secondly, it may be remarked, that the persons who came as at this time to Bethlehem, were the learned of their country—men particularly addicted to the sciences of philosophy and astronomy. They contemplated the heavens, and at length were favoured with the sight of a star, which led them to him who made the heavens, and who was then descended from on high, to perform a work still more wonderful. Man was formed with an understanding for the attainment of knowledge; and happy is he who is employed in the pursuit of it. Ignorance is in its nature unprofitable; but every kind of knowledge may be turned to use. Diligence is generally rewarded with the discovery of that which it seeks after—sometimes of that which is much more valuable. Human learning, with the blessing of God upon it, introduces us to divine wisdom; and while we study the works of nature, the God of nature will manifest himself to us; since, to a well tutored mind, "The heavens," without a miracle, "declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work."

Thirdly, from the example of the magi, Let us learn to be very watchful and observant of those lights, which at sundry times and in divers manners are vouchsafed to us. At the last day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and the circumstances of our lives shall pass in re-

\* Ps. xcvi. 1, &c.

view, it will then be seen, that God did not "leave himself without witness." It will appear, that the sinner had many calls, both from within and from without, to which he might have hearkened; and to which if he had hearkened, they had been the means of correcting, instructing, and saving him. Above all things, how attentive should we be to the scriptures, wherein are contained the words that must finally decide the fate of those who have them in their hands, and are capable of perusing them. In them shines, with pure and ever-increasing lustre, the sure word of prophecy, pointing always, from the beginning, to the Saviour of mankind, and at last marking out the very place of his birth; like the star in the east, moving onward in its sphere, till "it came, and stood over, where the young child was." If we are not led by the one to seek after the Redeemer, surely they, who set out for Judea upon the evidence of the other, must rise up in the judgment against us, and condemn us.

Lastly, When we reflect upon the difficulties and dangers that lay in the way of these eastern sages, and the unremitting perseverance which vanquished them all, we shall blush at the remembrance of those trifling obstructions in our Christian course, which we have so often been tempted to deem insuperable. Our faith, once fixed on the basis of its proper evidence, should never be shaken by the cavils of sceptical and licentious men. For when there is great strength of argument set before us, if we refuse to do what appears most fit to be done, till every little objection is removed that metaphysical refinement can invent, we shall never take one wise resolution as long as we live. Let faith, therefore, have its perfect work; let it go on, conquering, and to conquer, till we have thereby completely overcome the world. Though Herod should be moved, and all Jerusalem with him, let us follow our heavenly conductor, and, rejoicing with exceeding great joy, proceed directly to Bethlehem. There, through meanness, poverty, and obscurity, let us discern the king of the Jews, give him the honour due unto his name, acknowledge and adore him, as our Lord, and our God. And since we are commanded not to appear before the Lord empty, let us bring presents, when we come into his courts. Let us offer to him of our substance, and the first fruits of our increase; let us offer to him of the true riches, with which he has blessed us; faith, tried,

precious, resplendent, as *gold*; devotion, ascending from fervent affections, like the smoke of *frankincense* from the holy altar; love, peace, joy, and the other graces of sanctification, fragrant, cheering, and diffusive, like "*myrrh*, and aloes, with all the chief spices, and powders of the merchant." Let us offer to him our strength, our time, and our talents, our souls and bodies, all we have, and all we are, to worship and obey him this day, and every day which it shall please him to add to our lives. With these dispositions and resolutions, if we now come to his light, and haste to the brightness of his rising, we shall hereafter behold him in his meridian exaltation, when heaven and earth shall be full of the majesty of his glory; when, the last enemy being destroyed, he shall appear, as the "Prince of Peace," in a city that hath foundations; when all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him; when he shall reign for ever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords; when he shall receive, as his just and rightful tribute (the only tribute which can then be paid) the praises of his redeemed subjects, and the everlasting hallelujahs of the celestial choir, ascribing, as we now do to him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. And let all the people say, Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XIII.

THE RIGHTEOUS DELIVERED.

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*And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.*—Gen. xix. 29.

EXTRAORDINARY interpositions of Providence demand extraordinary attention. If God speaks, it is but reasonable that man should hear. And when he executed the ven-



geance to which the text referreth, he certainly spake, in an audible voice, to the hopes and fears of all the dwellers upon earth. By the deliverance vouchsafed to his righteous servant, he encouraged the hopes of such as, like him, preserved their integrity in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: while, by the unparalleled destruction of the cities of the plain, he alarmed the fears of those who resembled them in impiety and iniquity. And although so many hundred years have passed, since that astonishing catastrophe took place, yet the history should answer the same purpose now, that the event itself was designed to do then. No time can destroy the efficacy of this salutary medicine for the disorders of the world. Virtue and vice are not changeable things; they continue still the same; and there is no alteration in the divine decrees concerning them. Sooner or later, in this life or the next, a deliverance similar to that of Lot will be granted to the righteous; a destruction correspondent to that of Sodom will be the portion of the wicked. For, as St. Peter argues on the subject, “ If God, turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example to those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked—the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.\*

It is with the utmost propriety, therefore, that the church, in the course of her *proper* lessons, openeth the present season of humiliation with a display of so awful and affecting a scene of mercy and judgment; that the sinner may know how terrible is the wrath of an incensed God, and the penitent be taught the way to escape it.

In conformity to so judicious an appointment, it is proposed, in the following Discourse, to take a view of the whole narrative, illustrating the several parts of it with such observations and reflections as, it may be presumed, the church intended we should make upon it, with an eye to the great doctrine of *repentance*, at this time more especially to be recommended and inculcated.

In the preceding chapter, the 18th of Genesis, we find the holy patriarch Abraham interceding with Jehovah for

\* 2 Pet. ii. 6—9.

sinful Sodom. And we find (such is the amazing extent of divine mercy) that had there been only TEN righteous persons in the city, the rest would have been spared for their sakes. But universal corruption brings on universal destruction, and Abraham himself can intercede no longer.—“The Lord left communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place.”

Our blessed Lord, in whose name Abraham, as a prophet, and as the father of the faithful, interceded for Sodom, intercedes, in like manner, for the world, which, notwithstanding the wickedness of its inhabitants in general, is continued in being, on account of the righteous it contains, and the execution of God's counsels concerning his church. When the faithful shall be “minished from among the children of men,” when unbelief and disobedience shall have overspread the earth, the intercession of Christ will also be at an end, and vengeance will be poured out on the world of the ungodly. Then he, who now “maketh intercession for sinners,” will no more “offer their offerings, or take up their names into his lips.” Then, that which alone hath so long stood between an angry God and a guilty world, shall cease to do so, and a deluge of fiery indignation will issue from the presence of the Lord, to devour the whole earth; even as the waters of the sea once brake forth, and destroyed all flesh, upon the removal of those bars and doors appointed by the Almighty to confine them within their channel. Let every man, therefore, be diligent to secure a part in the benefits of that gracious intercession, which is one day to have an end. Behold “the great High Priest of our profession” standing before the altar in heaven, with his golden censer in his hand, ready to offer up the prayers of his servants, with the sweet incense of his own merits, to make them accepted with the Father. Now, then, let prayer ascend from earth to heaven, to glorify God, and pardon will descend from heaven to earth, to bless mankind—as we read in the epistle for the day—“Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.”

The destruction of Sodom being thus determined, Lot was to be first called out of it. Accordingly, “There came two angels to Sodom,” on the evening before the dreadful sentence was put in execution; “and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom.”

Happy were the days, when celestial visitants thus deigned

to descend, and converse with men, "as a man converseth with his friend." But surely, we have no reason to complain of any partiality shown, in this respect, to our fathers; we to whom God hath been manifested, not under a similitude, or temporary appearance, but verily and indeed, in a body of our flesh, no more to be deposited, or laid aside, but actually taken up into heaven with him; we, to whom the word of life hath been sent by the hand of such a messenger, the "*angel of the covenant*;"\* we, to whom this comfortable promise hath been made by the mouth of TRUTH itself;—"If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come, and make our abode with him."† By his Word, and by his Spirit, Christ continually visiteth his people, and dwelleth in the hearts of the faithful.—"Blessed is the man, who sitteth at the gate of Sodom," ready to arise and depart out of a wicked world, at the moment when his Lord shall call him hence. He shall be visited with the visitation of the Almighty, instructed in the counsels of heaven, and delivered in the day of vengeance.

Upon the sight of his divine guests, "Lot rose up to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; and he said, Behold now my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay, but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly, and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house: and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat."

The admonition of the apostle, grounded upon this occurrence, naturally offers itself; "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."‡ It may be added, thereby Christians entertain their Redeemer, who, for their sakes, was once a *stranger* upon the earth, and who therefore regards hospitality shown to strangers on his account, as shown to himself.—"I was a stranger, and ye took me in; for inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it to me."§

Instructed moreover by this example of Lot, when we have the honour, like him, to entertain heavenly guests, who present themselves to us, by means of the word and sacra-

\* Mal. iii. 1.

† John xiv. 23.

‡ Heb. xiii. 2.

§ Matt. xxv. 35. 40.

ments, in the church, let us instantly “arise,” in heart and mind, “to meet them,” laying aside, for a time, all worldly business, and forgetting those things that are behind. Let us, “bow ourselves with our faces toward the ground,” in humble and fervent prayer, saying, in the words of holy David, “Remember us, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people, O visit us with thy salvation.”\* “Turn into the house of thy servants, and tarry with us.” At first, perhaps, our prayers may seem not to be heard, as the angels said, they would “abide in the street all night;” and as Christ, when invited by the two disciples at Emaus, “made as though he would have gone farther.”† But all this is done with the same intent that our Lord spake the parable of the poor widow and the unjust judge, to teach us, that “men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”‡ By delaying the return of our prayers, God designs to try our love, and train us to perseverance, not to reject our petitions, and to hide his face from us for ever. When Lot earnestly *pressed* the angels, they went in and tarried with him; and the two disciples *constrained* Jesus to go in and sup with them. Faint hearts and feeble hands obtain not the kingdom of heaven, which “suffereth violence,” and must be taken by “an holy force.” The “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” is the feast which our Lord expecteth, when he is pleased to come and dwell in our hearts.—“No leaven” of hypocrisy, deceit, and fraud, should then be “found in our houses.”

No sooner had Lot received and lodged his divine guests, but he suffered persecution on their account. And although he went out and spake with all the mildness imaginable to the wretches that “compassed the house about, old and young, from every quarter—I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly; to these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof;” what was the return made to this reasonable request, worded in the most humble and submissive terms?—“Stand back. This fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge. Now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they smote the

\* Ps. cvi. 4.

† Luke xxiv. 28.

‡ Luke xviii. 1.



men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great; so that they wearied themselves to find the door."

Truth and righteousness are guests that often bring those who entertain them into trouble; and our Lord himself tells us, that, in one sense, he came "not to send peace on earth, but a sword." At his birth, "Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Wherever the gospel was preached, it produced a commotion among those who could not bear the lustre of its beams, and "hated the light, because their deeds were evil." The world opposed its Redeemer, when he "testified concerning it, that its deeds were evil." Lot had lived too long in Sodom, and knew too much of its inhabitants, to desire the office of a *judge* among them, or any farther connexion with them than was necessary. But his righteous example condemned their wickedness; and that circumstance provoked them more, than if he had really usurped the government. It was charged, likewise, upon our Saviour, though the meekest and lowliest of characters, that he "made himself a king," and endeavoured to supplant the authority of Cæsar. And for that crime, if we believe the superscription on the cross, he was executed. But the true cause both of the accusation and execution was no other than this, that, by doctrine and example, he detected, and exposed a set of the vilest hypocrites the earth ever bore. Nor let the disciples of Christ vainly imagine, that the most inoffensive carriage, framed by the rules of Christian prudence, and actuated in all points by the spirit of meekness and charity, will prevent him from being sometimes accused of designs, to which his soul is an utter stranger. Would he escape the censures of the world?—He must cease to convict it of sin and error: he must conform to all its ways, and pace quietly in its trammels; a conduct, which, as they well know, who tempt him to adopt it, will soon deprive him of all authority and ability to do his heavenly Master service, and promote his religion among men. So far, therefore, let him imitate the example of Lot, as to part with any thing, rather than suffer violence to be done to his divine guests. Let him guard his faith and his conscience, and trust God for every thing else. He who preserved Lot, and smote his adversaries with blindness, can save them that love him in every age, and secure them under the wings of his providence,

until the tyranny of the wicked be overpast; while the ungodly that trouble them, blind to their eternal interest, find not the gate of heaven, and come not into the dwellings of the righteous; but falling from one wickedness to another, and filling up the measure of their enormities, perish, at the last, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when "he cometh to judge the world in righteousness."

Lot, being thus preserved from the malice of his enemies, is now informed concerning the decrees of heaven.—"The men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." How alarming this intelligence! No farther respite allowed; instant destruction determined; the day of grace expiring, and a stormy night about to succeed it! He who would not perish, must leave all, and escape for his life!

But are "the cities of the plain" only concerned here? Or is not this written for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, it is written; since the scriptures of truth, and, from them, the ministers and messengers of God, give us the same information, relative to the world in which we dwell, namely, that "the Lord will destroy this place," and will "purge away the iniquity thereof with the spirit of judgment, and with the spirit of burning." For, "Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place, to visit the wickedness of such as dwell upon the earth. But who may abide the day of his coming? Who shall be able to stand, when he appeareth? His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the barn, but he will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night; and when men shall say, peace, and all things are safe, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as sorrow cometh upon a woman travailing with child, and they shall not escape. Then shall appear the wrath of God in the day of vengeance, which obstinate sinners, through the stubbornness of their hearts, have heaped unto themselves, who despised the goodness, patience, and long sufferance of God, when he called them continually to repentance. Then shall it be too late to knock, when the door

shall be shut; and too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice. O terrible voice of most just judgment, which shall be pronounced upon them, when it shall be said unto them, Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.\* Such, therefore, being the message delivered to mankind, may it not be said to every one of them—"Hast thou here any besides? Son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast, bring them out of this place;" endeavour to withdraw their affections from a world doomed to ruin, and take them to heaven with thee. In a word, give all thy relations, thy friends, and thine acquaintance, the warning which is given thee.

The injunction received by Lot from the divine persons was immediately obeyed.—"He went out unto his sons-in-law, saying, Up, get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." A denunciation of approaching destruction, in the midst of peace and security, appeared so very extraordinary to them, that they could not bring themselves to believe it possible their father-in-law should be in earnest. They looked around them, and saw no symptoms of impending ruin. The city wore its accustomed face of gaiety and pleasure. No alteration was to be observed in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath. And that the knowledge of an event so important should be hidden from the rich and the great, the wise and prudent, and revealed only to one person, a sojourner amongst them—How could these things be?

They who have gazed on earthly glories, till they are grown giddy; to whom want and misery are known only by their names; who make every day a day of fulness and indulgence, sitting down to eat, and to drink, and rising up to play; such find no small difficulty in believing, that a world, so delightful as they think this to be, shall shortly be burnt up, and all its beauties wither in a moment. They see that "all things continue as they were from the beginning;" and are therefore ready to say, "Where is the promise of his coming?"† In the polite circle of their acquaintance they hear nothing of this kind mentioned; it is foretold only by a few despised priests; and as to what these say concerning the wickedness of men, and the judgments of God, philo-

\* Exhortation in the Commination Office.

† 2 Pet. iii. 4.

sophers place it to the account of *superstition*, if they are Papists; *enthusiasm*, if they are Protestants. Thus it is that sinners deceive, or suffer themselves to be deceived, till the destruction predicted, falling upon them, demonstrates, when, alas, it is too late for them to profit by the demonstration, the fallacy of their reasonings, or rather, the vanity of their imaginations. For surely, did not these priests “seem as they who mock,” when they declare what the sacred writings authorize them to declare upon the subject, it could not be, but their words must have more effect upon the minds and manners of men, than they are generally found to have. The intemperate person who heard them, would become temperate; the impure, pure; the avaricious, liberal; the turbulent, peaceable; the calumniator, charitable; the proud, humble; the envious, loving; the liar, a speaker of truth. Should the Judge of the world appear in the clouds, this would be the case. And as faith is “the evidence of things not seen,” rendering them present, and setting them before us, a right belief in that article of the creed, which relates to the appearance of our Judge, would operate like his actual presence.—“All men have not faith,” and therefore all men do not “work righteousness.” But, “whether they hear, or whether they forbear,” Lot is to deliver the divine message to his sons-in-law; the watchman is to blow the trumpet in Sion; and every Christian is to exhort his brother; after which, the matter must be committed to other hands.

The day now dawned, which was the last the men of Sodom were ever to behold.—“When the morning arose, the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.”

Let us paraphrase this admonition of the angels, and suppose it addressed by the ministers of God to the sinner, at this penitential season—Arise, O man, repent, and be converted; break off thy sins, and escape from the pollutions of the world, while thy God calls thee, and allows thee time so to do. Perhaps the day hath dawned which is to be thy last, and the destroying angel is even now come forth, with his sword drawn, to cut thee off from the land of the living, and consign thee to thy portion in the un-



known region of separate spirits, waiting, either with joyful hope, or insupportable amazement, for the revelation of the day of God. Arise, therefore, and come away.

It is observable, that Lot himself, though he fully believed there would be a performance of those things that were told him, yet made not that haste to get out of Sodom which the case required. For—"While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him: and they brought him forth and set him without the city."

How apt is the sinner to linger, and to defer his repentance! How often is God forced, as it were, to arrest him by sickness, or some grievous calamity, and so to drag him from perdition! And, O, how merciful is the Lord to that man whom, by any means, however painful and afflicting, he bringeth forth into safety, and "setteth him without the city!" Let such an one hear the voice of his gracious Deliverer saying to *him* in the person of Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed"—Escape, O sinner, for thine eternal life; look not behind thee on the pleasures thou hast left, neither let thine affections stay upon the earth; escape to the holy mountain, lest thou be consumed with the world.

Lot, despairing of being able to escape to the mountain, intercedes for the preservation of a little city in the neighbourhood of Sodom, and is accepted concerning it, God being graciously pleased to say,—“Haste thee, escape thither, for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore, the name of the city was called *Zoar*,” that is, the *little* city.

Thus, in times of public calamity, there is often some little Zoar provided for them that love God, where they are wonderfully preserved from the judgments that fall on their country and their kindred. The Roman armies, which surrounded Jerusalem, to execute on it the vengeance predicted, drew off, in an unaccountable manner, as if their design had been to give the Christians, contained within its walls, an opportunity of withdrawing to a little adjoining city, called Pella, which proved a Zoar to them, from whence they beheld the Roman eagles fly again to the destined prey, to be left no more till they had devoured it. And what is the

church upon earth, but a Zoar, a little city (is it not a little one?) spared at the intercession of its Lord? Here the penitent, not yet strong enough to escape to the heavenly mountain, findeth rest and refreshment, and is invigorated to pursue his journey. Hither let him escape, and his soul shall live.

But let him bear in mind, that in making his escape, perseverance alone can secure him.—“He that endureth to the end,” and he only, “shall be saved.” Of the four who left Sodom, one perished by the way, in heart and affection turning back to the forsaken city. Within sight of Zoar stands a pillar of salt, “the monument (saith the author of the book of wisdom) of an unbelieving soul.”\* “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”† “Remember Lot’s wife.”‡

The hour was now come, when Sodom, the gay, the haughty Sodom, should be no more.—“The sun was risen upon the earth, when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.” In this manner, to use the words of the above cited author,—“When the ungodly perished, WISDOM delivered the righteous man, who fled from the fire which fell upon the cities, of whose wickedness, even to this day, the waste land that smoketh is a testimony, and plants bearing fruit that never come to ripeness.”§

“As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man;”|| when that last morning shall dawn, and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise in glorious majesty upon the earth. No sooner shall he make his appearance, than the heavens, being on fire at his presence, shall be dissolved, and pass away with a great noise; the earth also, with the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Then shall be fulfilled that which was spoken by the Psalmist, in terms evidently borrowed from the history before us;—“Upon the ungodly he shall rain fire and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be their portion.”¶ And it may be observed, that St. John, at the conclusion of

\* Ch. x. 7.

† Luke ix. 62.

‡ Luke xvii. 32.

§ Wisdom x. 6.

|| Luke xvii. 28.

¶ Ps. xi. 6.

his prophecy, describing the destruction of the ungodly, referreth likewise to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, which, as St. Jude informeth us, “are set forth for an example,” or figure, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”\* In the 20th chapter of the Revelation, we view the antichristian powers making war against the church, “encompassing the camp of the saints, and the beloved city,” the habitation of the great King, as the men of Sodom surrounded the house where the sacred guests were lodged. After which, it is said—“And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil, that deceived them, was cast into the LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE (an expression plainly alluding to the LAKE Asphaltites, or the dead sea), where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be, tormented day and night for ever and ever.” What Sodom is, the world shall be: and at the last day, when we shall arise, and look toward the place where its enchanting pleasures and delights, its dazzling beauties and glories once existed, as “Abraham arose in the morning, and looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the cities of the plain,” we shall behold a sight like that which presented itself to the patriarch,—“The smoke of the country going up as the smoke of a furnace!”

But the same all gracious and merciful God, who, “when he destroyed the cities of the plain, remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow,” when he shall destroy this place wherein we dwell, will remember the true Abraham, “the father of us all,” our dear Redeemer and Intercessor; and for his sake, if we now repent, and believe in him, will save us, in that day, from the ruins of a burning world, and from those fires which are never to be extinguished; that so, being delivered from the wrath to come, and admitted to a participation of the felicities of his kingdom, we may there, with angels and archangels, and the whole company of the redeemed, glorify him for his mercy, through the endless ages of a blessed eternity; ascribing, as is due, to the most holy and adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons coequal and coeternal, all honour and power, might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever.

\* Jude, ver. 7.

## DISCOURSE XIV.

THE SINNER CALLED.

*Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.—Eph. v. 14.*

WE are now in the midst of that hallowed season, when the church, by the voice of all her holy services, calleth the world to repentance, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. And if ever there was an institution calculated to promote the glory of God, by forwarding the salvation of man, it is this appointment of a certain set time for all persons to consider their ways, to break off their sins, and to return from whence they have fallen, through the infirmities of the flesh, and the prevalence of temptation. For though most certain it is, that sorrow should be the constant attendant upon sin, and daily transgressions call for daily penitence, yet fatal experience convinces us of another truth no less certain, that, in a body so frail, and a world so corrupt, cares and pleasures soon oppress the heart, and insensibly bring on the slumbers of listlessness and negligence as to its spiritual concerns, which, unless dissipated and dispersed by frequently repeated admonitions, will at length seal it up in the deep sleep of a final impenitence. It was wisely foreseen, that, should the sinner be permitted to reserve to himself the choice of *a convenient season* wherein to turn from sin to righteousness, that *convenient season* would never come; and that the specious plea of keeping every day holy alike would often be found to cover a design of keeping none holy at all. It seemed good therefore to the church to fix a stated time, in which men might enter upon the great work of their repentance. And what time could have been selected with greater propriety than this *Lenten*, or *Spring* season, when universal nature, awaking from her wintry sleep, and coming out of a state of deformity, and a course of penance, imposed for the trans-



gression of man, her lord and master, is about to arise from the dead, and, putting on her garments of glory and beauty, to give us a kind of prelude to the renovation of all things? So that the whole creation most harmoniously accompanieth the voice of the church, as that sweetly accordeth to the call of the apostle, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

These lively and animating words, the peculiar force and energy of which it would be an affront to every understanding and every heart to point out, like the sound of that wakeful herald of the morning, which once called Peter to repentance, and which, daily admonishing the world of the sun's approach, calls up the inhabitants thereof, to behold the brightness of his rising, and to walk in his light, address themselves to the sinner, as to one fast holden in the bands of sleep, exhorting him to awake and look up, because the night is far spent, the day is at hand; and seem to be an evangelical paraphrase of that passage in the prophet Isaiah, which is a spiritual application of the most beautiful and magnificent image in nature, the rising of the sun upon the earth, with its effects and consequences;—"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

The text then, upon examination, will be found to imply thus much, that the world, without repentance, and faith in Christ, is in a state of *darkness*, *insensibility*, and *delusion*, for such is the state of them that *sleep*. We will take a view therefore of each of these particulars.

And first, these words plainly suppose the person to whom they are addressed, to be in a state of *darkness*. For "they who sleep (as the apostle elsewhere observeth), sleep in the night," which is the time of darkness, and, therefore, the season for repose. When the shadows of the evening are stretched out, and the earth, turning away from the sun, sinketh into the shadow of death, and thereby loseth all its form and comeliness; when the veil, that is cast over the face of nature, obliterated the variety of colours which owe their being to the light, and abolisheth all the distinction of objects thence arising, introducing a joyless and uncomfortable uniformity, and rendering it impossible for any to "go forth to their labour;" when "the night cometh, in which none can work," then it is that deep sleep falleth

upon man. Here, therefore, we have, according to the text, a representation of the state into which the soul is cast by sin, and in which it continueth, till recovered out of it by repentance and faith.—“Darkness,” as saith the prophet Isaiah, “covereth the earth, and gross darkness the people.” Midnight overwhelmeth not the earth with a grosser darkness, than that which is superinduced upon the heart of man, when it departeth from God, and is turned away from its Maker.—“He that followeth not Christ walketh in darkness,” because the light of life shineth no longer upon his tabernacle. When he has lost sight of the Sun of Righteousness, wisdom soon fadeth away, and understanding perisheth, and counsel is brought to nought, and the distinctions of good and evil are confounded. And now, the man walking in darkness, and not knowing whither he goeth, presently groweth weary and faint in his mind; whence, as natural darkness bringeth on sleep, ignorance, which is the darkness of the understanding, becometh the parent of indolence and inactivity, and casteth men by degrees into that deep sleep, which is a suspension of the powers and faculties of the soul from the works of the spiritual life, as natural rest is a suspension of the members of the body from the labours of the animal life. This is the night when no man can work out his salvation, for lack of knowledge; and the world, in this state, may not unfitly be resembled to the kingdom of Egypt, during the three days of thick darkness, when it is observed, that “no one stirred from his place.” Such is the condition of those who, in the proper and exact language of holy writ, are said to “sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death,” no one moving from his place to go forth to his work, or to walk in the way that leadeth unto life. In this comfortless situation was the whole world at the coming of Christ; and every man, whom the concerns or the pleasures of this life keep from the knowledge of the scriptures, and the wisdom therein contained, and so rendered negligent in the business of working out his own salvation, and contributing his utmost toward forwarding that of others, every such man is so far relapsed into the same situation, and standeth in need of the apostolical call, “Awake, thou that sleepest.”

But, secondly, The text plainly intimates to us, that the sinner, or man of the world, to whom it addresses itself as

to one sleeping, is in a state of *insensibility*. For no sooner has sleep taken possession of any one, but forthwith all the senses are locked up, and he neither seeth, heareth, smelleth, tasteth, or feeleth any thing. Incapable of being affected with what passes in the world, regardless of every thing that relates to his real interest in life, and no longer susceptible of pleasure or pain, joy or grief, from the objects which produce those sensations in others who are awake, he becometh like unto them that are gone down to the chambers of the grave, and sleep in the dust of the earth. Wherefore the apostle saith, using sleep and death as synonymous terms, "Awake, thou that SLEEPEST, and arise from the DEAD." This address therefore to the sinner, or man of the world, is founded upon a supposition, that the soul, by sin and the love of the world, is cast into the same state of insensibility with regard to things heavenly, that the body is in, while sleeping, with regard to things earthly; a state in which its spiritual senses, those senses which the apostle tells us should be "exercised to discern good and evil," are sealed up, and admit of no impression from their proper objects. And that this is in truth the case, a cursory view of the ideas transferred in scripture from the bodily senses, as rendered unfit for their respective uses by sleep, to the powers and operations of the mind, as impeded by sin, will quickly convince us.

The prophet Isaiah, describing his wretched countrymen, in their state of apostacy and obduracy of heart, says of them, "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes." Present the most finished and beautiful picture before the eyes of a person asleep; he sees no more of it than if it was not there. And how often are the pictures of our sin and deformity, and the righteousness and beauty of the Redeemer, drawn by the pencil of the Spirit in the scriptures of truth, how often are they offered to the understandings of men, who yet see neither? And why? Because "a spirit of deep sleep," induced by their attachment to something in the world, that comes in competition with the doctrines or precepts of the gospel, "is fallen upon them," so that, "having eyes, they see not." Go into the chamber of him that sleepeth, and read to him a piece of the most interesting news, play him the sweetest notes on the finest instrument,

or sound the loudest and shrillest trumpet; while he sleeps, he hears nothing. To as little purpose do the ministers of the gospel preach to the obdurate worldling the "glad tidings of great joy, that unto us is born a Saviour," or the awful tidings of as great terror, that "he cometh to execute judgment on all that are ungodly." The heavenly strains of love and mercy sounded forth by the harp of David, when breathed on by the Spirit of the Holy One, or the piercing trumpet of eternal judgment, waxing louder and louder on the top of Sinai, are equally unheard by him. He sleeps on still, and takes his rest; and therefore, "having ears, he hears not." Offer to the nostrils of one who sleepeth the most fragrant flowers that grow, the rose and the lily in their highest perfection, or the richest spices produced in the warmest climes: the flowers have no fragrance, the spices no odours for him. And are there not, who take no delight in that blessed person, from the comfort and refreshment he affordeth to the drooping soul, as well as from his matchless beauty and perfection, styled "the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys:" who can perceive no "sweet smelling savour of life unto life," in that gospel of peace, which is compared unto "myrrh, and frankincense, and all powders of the merchant?" Open the mouth of him that sleepeth, and fill it with the choicest honey: you have no thanks from him, for he tasteth it not. As little relish hath one in a state of sin and worldly-mindedness for those promises, which, when the penitent believer tasteth, he crieth out in transport, "O how sweet are thy words unto my mouth; yea, sweeter than honey unto my throat!" Lastly, a person, during the time of sleep, feels no wounds, or bruises, and passes imperceptibly into the regions of death. And this is the very apostolical description of hardened sinners, who have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness: they are said to be "past feeling, having their conscience seared with a hot iron."\* Awakened by the fires which burn for the impenitent, they feel at last the avenging hand of an angry God, and lift up their eyes in those torments, which will forbid the closing them any more for ever.

Thirdly, It appears from the text before us, that the

\* 1 Tim. iv. 2.



world is in a state of *delusion* ; for such is the state of them that sleep. To all things that really concern them they are insensible, but they are earnestly employed, meanwhile, in a shadowy fantastic scene of things, which has no existence but in their imaginations. And to what can the life of many a man be so fitly compared, as to a *dream* ! What are the vain employments and amusements of multitudes, but “visions of the night?” And is not he, who wasteth his time and breath in relating the history of them, “as a man telling a dream to his fellow?” Is a dream made up of illusive images, false objects and pursuits, false hopes, and false fears? So is the life of a man of the world. Now he exults in visionary bliss—now he is racked with disquietudes created by his own fancy. Ambition strains every nerve to climb to a height that is ideal, till, with all the eagerness of desire, grasping at the summit, she seems to feel herself half dead by a fall that is as much so ; since neither if a man be in power, is he really and in the sight of God the greater ; nor if he be out of power, is he the less. Avarice flies with fear and trembling from a poverty of which there is no danger, and with infinite anxiety and solicitude heapeth up riches that have no use. And while pleasure is incessantly shifting her painted scenes before the fancies of the gay, infidelity oftentimes seduceth the imaginations of the serious and contemplative into the airy regions of abstraction, setting them to construct intellectual systems, without one just idea of the spiritual world, and to delineate schemes of religion, exclusive of the true God and his dispensations. Thus doth man walk in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain, like one endeavouring to win a race in his sleep, still striving after that which he cannot attain unto, so long as he expects to find a solid, substantial, and durable comfort in any thing but “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”

Again—Is a dream ever wandering from one thing to another that has no connexion with it, and patched up of a thousand inconsistencies, without beginning, middle, or end? Not more so than the life of him, who, being devoted to the world, and at the mercy of his passions, is now in full chase after one shadow, now after another ; so continually varying and changing, and yet withal so uniformly trifling and insignificant in all his sentiments and proceed-

ings, that were the transactions of his days noted down in a book, it may be questioned, whether a dream would not appear, upon the comparison, to be a sensible and regular composition.

Once more—Is a dream fleeting and transitory, insomuch that a whole night passeth away in it as one hour, nay, as one minute, since, during sleep, we have no idea of the succession of time? And what is a life of fourscore years, when looked backed upon?—"It is but as yesterday, seeing it is past as a watch in the night." How beautifully is the fading nature of all those things, on which worldly men place their affections, set forth to us in the holy scriptures, under this most expressive image!—"Knowest not thou this of old (says Zophar in Job), since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, where is he? He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night."\* "I was envious (says the Psalmist) at the foolish, I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. Behold, these are the ungodly that prosper in the world; they increase in riches."† The sight at first staggered his faith, and he was tempted almost to distrust the promises of God made to the righteous.—"Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." But when he went into the sanctuary of God, and consulted the divine oracles, as we all should do, upon these matters, then he "saw the end of such men," and the transient nature of that wealth which had excited his envy.—"How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment; they are utterly consumed with terrors! As a dream, when one awaketh, so, O Lord, shalt thou make their image to vanish." And was the task enjoined us, to describe that disappointment and wretched emptiness which the miserably deceived soul of him who lives and dies in carnality and worldly-mindedness will experience upon the moment of her separation from the body, what words could we find for the purpose, like these

\* Job xx. 4, &c.

† Ps. lxxiii. 3.

of the prophet Isaiah?—"It shall be as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite,"\* remaining altogether unsatisfied with the pleasures which he seemed for a while to enjoy. Such a state of *delusion* is the state of the world; so vain, so incoherent, so transitory, are the schemes and designs of worldly men: and however important they may appear to the projectors of them, at the time, yet most certain it is, that what the scripture saith of Pharaoh, may be said, with equal truth, at the death of every man, who has spent his days in things pertaining to this life only;—"So he awoke, and behold, it was a dream!"

But it is high time to change this gloomy scene for one that is more agreeable. Permit me, therefore, to contrast the foregoing description of the state of man, a stranger to repentance and faith in Christ, with one of the opposite state, to which we are called in the text;—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

And first, The sincere penitent, who really and truly turns from sin to righteousness, and from the world to Christ, passes from *darkness* to *light*. He undergoes a change, like that made in man and in universal nature by the dawning of the morning, when there is a resurrection of both. For then it is, that man awaketh out of sleep, and ariseth as it were from the dead, to behold the light looking forth of the windows of the east, and the day breaking upon the tops of the hills; at which time the shadows fly away, and the clouds, parting asunder, open a passage for that life-giving luminary, whose appearance the expectation of the creature impatiently waiteth for. The sun, "that marvellous instrument of the Most High," ariseth in glorious majesty, disclosing and adorning all things in heaven and earth. And now, the darkness is past, and the light shineth, to the end that all who are risen may go forth to their work, and to their labour, until the evening. So is it likewise in the repentance of a sinner. At the powerful call of God, whether by his word read or preached, by the admonition of charitable friends, by some happy incident, or change of fortune, by the death of others, or the sickness of the party

\* Isa. xxix. 8.

himself—for various are the methods made use of by the divine Providence for this gracious purpose—at the powerful call of God, he awaketh to righteousness, and findeth himself in a new world. He perceiveth that, through the tender mercy of God, the day-spring from on high hath visited him, to give unto him the knowledge of salvation for the remission of his sins, concerning which he was before in darkness and the shadow of death. But now, all the shadows of his former ignorance fly away, all his earthly prejudices and passions are overcome, and dispersing like the clouds before the morning sun, the way is prepared for the Sun of Righteousness to arise upon him. By *his* glorious light, all the dispensations of God, in heaven and upon earth, are made manifest; and the man, being arisen to a life of grace, goeth forth to the work of his salvation, and to his labour of love, until the evening of his day.

Secondly, A sinner, by repentance, is brought out of a state of *insensibility* into one of *sensibility*. No sooner is a person awaked out of sleep, but he finds himself endued with the use of all his senses, powers, and faculties. He walketh abroad, and his eyes are blessed with a sight of the whole creation risen with him from the dead, and rejoicing in the glorious light shining upon it from above. He surveys that lovely variety which displays itself upon the face of the earth, and beholds the beauty and brightness of the firmament of heaven. But chiefly his attention is fixed on the Great Ruler of the day, who gives life and comeliness to all things. His ears are entertained with the music of the birds of the air, who fail not with their sprightliest notes to salute the rising sun; and his nostrils are refreshed with the grateful smell sent forth, in the hour of prime, from the ground and its productions. He is prepared to taste with delight the food afforded him by the bounty of God; and no part of his body is without the sensation proper and necessary for it. Similar to this is the alteration which takes place in the soul of the humble penitent, when at the call of God he awakes, and arises from the dead. If the light be sweet, and it be a pleasant thing to the eyes to behold the sun, sweet to the mind likewise is the light of life, and a pleasant thing it is to the eyes of the understanding to behold the Sun of Righteousness, who bestows by his word that divine knowledge and heavenly wisdom, which is to *them* what the material light is to the bodily organs of



vision. Hereby the penitent believer is enabled to behold the wonderful works of the Lord, the mighty things he hath done for his soul, having created all things anew in Christ Jesus, and brought the world out of darkness into his marvellous light. But above all the works, he is led to contemplate, and to adore the Author of them all; to look up steadfastly, with St. Stephen, into heaven, and see Jesus enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high, enlightening and enlivening all things with the glory of his grace. And this is what St. Paul so earnestly begs of God for his Ephesian converts, that, being now awake from sin, they might behold the works and the glory of the Redeemer. "I cease not, says he, to make mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all."\* The hearing ear is another gift of God to the sincere penitent, who is now no longer deaf to the voice of his Redeemer, speaking to him by his holy word, which entereth through his ears into his heart: he heareth and delighteth in the melody of praise and thanksgiving, that music of the church, that voice of joy and health in the dwellings of the righteous; nay, faith carries him to the door of heaven, where, listening, he heareth that new song, and those everlasting hallelujahs, in which he one day hopeth to bear his part. And now, he walketh forth in the garden of God, the holy scripture, to enjoy that sweet smelling savour of life unto life, which ariseth from the comfortable promises therein contained, grateful as the fragrance of the holy vestments in the

\* Eph. i. 16, &c.

nostrils of the patriarch, “as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.” He hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness, and hath a true taste and relish for the bread of life, insomuch that he inviteth all men to partake with him, in the words of the Psalmist;—“O taste, and see that the Lord is gracious!” And such is the sensibility of his soul, that as he feels an exquisite delight in the testimony of a good conscience, so is he pained at the recollection of any the least sin; nor can he find any rest, till he has invoked the aid of the great Physician of souls, by fervent and importunate prayer, opened his grief to him by a full and free confession of his guilt, and received a perfect cure from his hands, by a fresh application of his all-sufficient merits.

Thirdly, The penitent is translated from a state of *delusion* to a *sound judgment* and *right apprehension* of things, from shadows to realities; even as one awaketh from the romantic scenery of a dream, to behold all things as they really are, and to do his duty in that station in which God has placed him. No sooner is a man awaked to righteousness, and risen with Christ to work out his salvation, but all his former vain and unprofitable life seemeth as a night vision. When the Lord turneth away the captivity of one, whom Satan hath long bound with the chains and fetters of evil habits, when he delivereth him out of the hands of his enemies to serve God without fear, the time of his bondage under the elements of the world, and the dominion of sin, appeareth as a dream, from which he now findeth himself most happily awaked; awaked to the prospect of a bliss that is not visionary, of a real and substantial good, that melteth not into air, as the shadowy enjoyments of this world do, but affordeth solid comfort to the person who is possessed of it; awaked to follow after that honour which cometh from God only, those riches which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, those pleasures which are at God’s right hand, and that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation; awaked to a steady and uniform pursuit of these glorious objects, instead of that endless desire of novelty and variety, which wearieth the men of the world, leaving them always disappointed of their hope; in a word, awaked to the knowledge and love of an inheritance in light, that fadeth not, but shall endure for ever in heaven, even when

the world itself shall fly away as a dream, and the very remembrance of it vanish as a vision of the night.

If therefore these things be so—and surely the scriptures say they are ; if the state of the sinner, or man of the world, be one of *darkness, insensibility, and delusion* ; and if such a state be not judged preferable to one of *light, and sense, and substantial reality* ; let no man be disobedient to the voice of the church, which, through the course of this penitential season, incessantly addresseth every one of her children ;—“ Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest : awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, and mind earthly things : awake, O thou Christian soul, and utter a song in praise of him who hath redeemed thee : awake, awake, put on the Lord Jesus thy strength, put on righteousness and holiness, thy beautiful garments ; shake thyself from the dust, and set thy affections on things above : the night is far spent, the day is at hand ; cast off therefore the works of darkness, and put on the whole armour of light : arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee : arise, and stand up from the dead, and Christ shall give thee the light of life.

Awakened by these repeated calls, be it our care to arise without delay to newness of life, not suffering ourselves, through sloth and indolence, to relapse into evil habits, like the sluggard upon his bed, who requireth always “ a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep.” Let us arise at the first admonition, because, that being rejected, God may not vouchsafe us another ; and there will be more difficulty in obeying it, if he should do so. Let us therefore dread a relapse, and guard against it.

For this purpose, let us be constantly *employed* in some good work, and much of the danger will be removed ; since listlessness in the mind, like a lethargy in the body, is best cured by motion and exercise ; and when temptations are creeping upon us, there is no better method of baffling and putting them to flight, than by forcing ourselves to read, or pray, or perform some other work of piety to God, or charity to our neighbour. Above all things, let us beware, that surfeiting and excess do not oppress and weigh down the heart, inducing sleep upon the soul, as well as the

body. Let us be temperate, let us be sober, walking evermore as children of the light, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; for all these are the works of darkness: but that darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. Thus shall we be qualified to set and keep that constant watch, which is absolutely necessary to perceive and repel the enemy, at his first approach.—“What I say unto you (saith Christ to his disciples), I say unto all—WATCH.” This if we do, we shall spend our day, as it ought to be spent, in working out our salvation, and not dream away, in vanity and folly, the precious and fleeting hours allowed us for that purpose. And happy, thrice happy the man, who, in the evening of life, taking a survey of what is past, shall be able to say, with an humble confidence, to his blessed Master, as that Master, in the days of his flesh, said to the Father—“I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” His body shall lie down in the dust in perfect peace, and rest in hope, till the dawning of the great day; when that likewise shall receive its summons from heaven, by the voice of the archangel;—“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

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## DISCOURSE XV.

### THE NOBLE CONVERT.

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*And the Eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this; of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.—Acts viii. 34, 35.*

WE are now drawing toward the close of that penitential season, set apart by the wisdom of the church for retirement and recollection, confession and humiliation, mortification and self-denial, meditation and devotion; to the end that having discovered and cast out our sins, having subdued



pride, and extinguished concupiscence, having brought the body into subjection, and rendered the spirit tender, and humble, and holy, we might be prepared to attend our blessed Redeemer, at the celebration of his last passover; to accompany him from the garden to the high priest's palace, from thence to the prætorium, and from thence to Mount Calvary; there to take our station, with the virgin mother, and the beloved disciple, at the foot of the cross, and "look on him whom we have pierced." The history therefore of the Ethiopian nobleman's conversion, effected by St. Philip's expounding to him the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, seemeth no improper subject whereon to employ our thoughts, at a time when the church is enforcing on us the duties of repentance and faith, by the same argument which first produced them in the heart of that illustrious person; namely, the unexampled sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God for the sins of the world; to the contemplation of which is dedicated the great and holy week upon which we this day enter; a week, spent in such a manner by them of old time, as made it evident to every beholder, that these were "the days in which the bridegroom was taken away." For now (as the ancient canons and constitutions inform us) men gave over all worldly employments, and, making the happy exchange of earth for heaven, betook themselves wholly to devotion, heightened and improved by those religious exercises, which the experience of pious men in all ages hath evinced to be conducive to that end. Dismissing therefore from our thoughts the cares and pleasures of a vain and transitory world, every thing that perplexeth, and every thing that defileth, let us take a view of the no less engaging than interesting circumstances of the history before us.

St. Philip, commonly styled the evangelist, one of the seven deacons, and next in order to St. Stephen, being driven from Jerusalem by the persecution which arose at the time of the protomartyr's death, went down to the city of Samaria, and, ever mindful of the commission he had received, and the necessity of executing it, preached Christ to the people there. So that the storm raised by the adversary against the church turned out to the furtherance of the gospel, being made a means of wafting the seeds of evangelical truth to distant lands, in order to a more plentiful and glorious harvest.

While he was employed in edifying his Samaritan converts,

a fresh opportunity was offered him of advancing his master's kingdom; as indeed opportunities of doing that blessed work are seldom wanting to him who has the piety and skill to seize and improve them aright.—“The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert.” The most unpromising journey shall be a prosperous one, when undertaken in obedience to the divine designation, intimated by a lawful call. Nor let the minister of Christ despair, whose lot is cast in the midst of spiritual barrenness and desolation. He who sent Philip to a desert place, did not send him there for nought; since even in such a soil he raised a fair and fragrant flower, which, having bloomed for its appointed time on earth, in the beauty of holiness, now displays its colours, and diffuses its odours, in the paradise of God; who, whenever he pleases to bless the labours of his servants, can cause “the wilderness and solitary place to be glad for them, and the desert to rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”

This Philip knew, and therefore made no objections, and asked no questions, but “arose and went.” And he who shows the same unreserved obedience to the will of his Lord, shall reap the fruits of it in this world, and that which is to come.

For no sooner was Philip arrived at the place appointed, but (the wisdom of God so ordering) behold, arrived at the same time, “a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure.” But what made this statesman great in the sight of God, was his extraordinary piety, which led him to the temple at Jerusalem. For the fame of this temple, diffused abroad among the nations round about, brought many continually to inquire “concerning the name of the Lord,” who resided in it, and to worship him in the court assigned them for that purpose, which was therefore styled the court of the *Gentiles*. Among others came this lord treasurer of Ethiopia, who, engaged, as he must of course be by his office, in a multiplicity of worldly business, and advanced to the height of worldly honour, could find time and inclination, it seems, to take a long journey on the account of religion; thinking himself never so well employed, as when suffered to prostrate himself before Jehovah,

the God of Israel; —“ he had been to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning.”

But as the tide of secular affairs, if suffered to break in, will presently extinguish the spark of devotion, though kindled in the soul by a coal from the altar; in order to cherish the heavenly thoughts and affections produced in his mind by worshipping toward the holy temple of the Lord, as he returned home in his chariot, “ he read Esaias the prophet;” thereby teaching us where to look for Christ, and how to sanctify with pious reading all our leisure hours; out of the many thousands of which so carelessly and extravagantly squandered (though God knows we have need enough of them all), there is not one, but, if rightly used, might set us considerably forward in our way to glory. How will this illustrious personage arise up in the judgment against all those Christians, who, in the hours of domestic ease and tranquillity, never open a bible, when he would not even travel without one in the chariot with him.—“ *Sitting in his chariot*, he read Esaias the prophet.” A nobleman thus employed, was an object that engaged the attention of heaven, and an evangelist was sent to sow the seed of eternal life in a ground so well prepared.—“ Arise (says the ever gracious Spirit of God to Philip), and go toward the south, to the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert;” for there he might behold a minister of state, sitting in his chariot, and reading the scriptures! So ready is God to teach, when man is ready to hear.

Such an opportunity of instructing the well disposed was not to be neglected, for a single moment, by the faithful messenger of Christ. No sooner therefore did the Spirit order Philip to “ go near and join himself to this chariot,” but he “ ran thither” instantly.

Being come to the side of the chariot, he “ heard him read Esaias the prophet;” and his introductory question to him was, “ understandest thou what thou readest?” A question, which every reader of the sacred books must frequently put to himself, if he would not read in vain. And happy they, who, like this nobleman, are not offended when it is put to them, but show the meek and teachable disposition of their minds by returning his answer;—“ How can I, except some man should guide me?” Such will have the wisdom and grace to desire the company of those (however lowly

their appearance and condition in the world may be, compared with their own) who can tell them words, whereby they may be saved.—“He desired Philip that he would come up, and sit with him.”

The evangelist being seated in the chariot, they proceed to consider the place of the scripture, to which the providence of God, predisposing those incidents commonly ascribed to chance, had directed the nobleman; which was the following passage in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah;—“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.”

It is obvious at first sight, that the prophet is here drawing a picture of afflicted innocence. But it was impossible for the nobleman to understand the place, because he knew not to whom the description belonged; as appears by his asking Philip—“I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this; of himself, or of some other man?”

This great leading question in the interpretation of the scriptures Philip will teach us how to answer, who, having waited all this time to hear his new disciple read the passage, and propose his difficulties upon it, now at length “opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus”—may not we suppose, without presumption, in words to the following effect—

Be not surprised to find, that you cannot, without assistance, attain to a right understanding of the ancient prophecies, seeing you want that key which alone can open them, and admit you to a discernment of the holy mysteries they contain. For prophecy, being not the word of man, but given by inspiration of the Spirit of God, terminates not in the temporary affairs of this world, but extends to the spiritual concerns of another and better life, leading men to that dispensation of love and mercy, which is now about to be unfolded to you.

Know then, that the prophet Isaiah, in the passage before us, is by no means speaking of *himself*, or his own private sufferings, but those of *another man*, in whom the whole world is interested; and who is mentioned by him elsewhere under the title of IMMANUEL, or, GOD WITH US; that divine person, ordained from the beginning to reverse the sad effects



of the fall of Adam, which you read of in the books of Moses, and to be the Redeemer of mankind from sin and sorrow, from death, temporal and eternal. This person, the object of the faith and hope of the people of God in all ages, prefigured in the law, foretold by the prophets, and celebrated in the Psalms, the Messiah of the Jews, and the desire of all nations, of whose appearing, as at this time a general expectation prevails among both, has accordingly been manifested in the flesh, to fulfil all that was written of him; and having kept the law for man, and suffered death for his transgression of it, he arose again on the third day, and ascended into heaven, from whence he sent down his Spirit, to establish his kingdom among the Gentiles, by the preaching of that gospel which the Jews have rejected, expelling those charged with the publication of it out of their coasts.

The behaviour of this stubborn and stiffnecked people, who, as they crucified the Master, never cease to persecute his servants, forces us to cry out in the words spoken by the prophet in spirit so long before; Lord, who, among thy once faithful people Israel, hath believed our report concerning the manifestation of thy Christ; and to whom hath this arm of Jehovah, this mighty power of God, been revealed, by our ministry, to the purposes of salvation?

You may wonder, perhaps, what could induce them to reject their Saviour, whom they were all along taught by their own scriptures to expect. It was the poverty and humility in which he came to visit us, so contrary to their modern proud and carnal conceits. For this being the season of his humiliation for our sins, he grew up, as Isaiah here describes him, small and of no reputation, from a family nearly extinct, like a tender plant, springing unnoticed from its root, hidden in a barren and dry land, out of which nothing eminent was expected to arise. In the manner of his appearance he had no form nor comeliness, none of the advantages of worldly grandeur, no ornaments of state to set him off; and when we saw him with our outward eyes, there was no beauty that we should desire him; his visage was so marred by sufferings more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. For the usage he met with from the world, was even more discouraging than his poor and lowly appearance. He was despised and rejected of the men he came to save: all his life long a man of sorrows, and ac-

quainted with grief, his bosom friend and companion night and day, during his pilgrimage upon earth. Unheeded and unregarded he walked amongst us, while we, not discerning his glory through the veil of flesh cast over it, hid, as it were, our faces from him, and would none of his company; but finding him despised by the many and the great, we esteemed him not, for the very reason which ought to have made him most dear unto us. For surely the griefs he bare, and the sorrows he carried, were not his own, but ours; yet we, not considering for whom he suffered, did esteem him the outcast of heaven and earth, stricken in just judgment from above, smitten of God in his anger, and afflicted by his heavy displeasure. And indeed he was wounded, but it was for our transgressions; he was bruised, but our iniquities bruised him; the chastisement he underwent procured our peace; and the stripes inflicted on his pure and innocent body, were as balm to heal the wounds of our polluted and guilty souls. Our sins were the true cause of his sorrows. All we, the wretched sons of wretched Adam, like sheep ever ready to wander from the fold, have gone astray; we have turned from the only right way, the path of God's commandments, every one to his own evil way; and the merciful Lord, instead of punishing us, laid on him the iniquities of us all; a burden, which the world could not have sustained a moment. He, the Son of God himself, was sore oppressed and afflicted with it; his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. But his love to man was invincible, burning and shining amidst a sea of troubles unutterable; all the waves of affliction, which broke over him, could not quench it, neither could the floods of Belial drown it. His resolution to save us, like a branch of the victorious palm, received strength from the weight laid upon it. He could have commanded the armies of heaven to have attended him in a moment; but thus it behoved Christ to suffer; and therefore the inhabitants of the regions of glory, instead of vindicating his innocence, taught the church of the redeemed to adore his passion; which, bitter as it was (for never was sorrow like unto his sorrow!) extorted not one repining or complaining word from him. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth. He was brought to the cross, all meekness and quietness, as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers, that liveliest

portraiture of resigned innocence, is dumb, so opened he not his mouth before his malicious persecutors. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away; the Judge of all the earth was condemned by one who acknowledged him to be guiltless; and though a person of such high and unspeakable dignity, that neither men nor angels can declare the manner of his generation, yet he shared with us the lot of mortality, and tasted death for every man; he was cut off from the land of the living, for the transgression of the people was he smitten. He, whose style is, "the Lord our righteousness," died with the wicked, and the possessor of heaven and earth was beholden to the rich for a grave. Although he had done no violence, neither was there deceit in his mouth, for in his person mercy and truth met together, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, as one made sin for us, though he himself knew no sin; he hath put him to grief, that we might rejoice evermore, seeing he made his soul an offering, and was accepted of the Father, as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. Accordingly, the debt man had contracted being discharged, his substitute was released from the prison of the grave, and ascended into his glory, where he reaps the fruit of his labours. For now he sees his seed, the generation of the faithful converts adopted into his family, and made his children; he has prolonged his days, and those of his spiritual offspring, for ever and ever; and the pleasure of the Lord, the work of man's salvation, prospers gloriously in his hands. He sees the numerous issue of the travail of his soul in those bitter pangs it endured upon the cross, and esteeming it an ample recompense for them all, is satisfied, and filled with joy. By the knowledge of his heavenly doctrine, to be preached in all the world, shall the righteous servant of Jehovah justify an innumerable multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who, like the spangles of early dew, or the stars of the firmament, shall shine evermore by communications of his glory; for he has borne their iniquities, and done away their sins. Therefore, the multitudes of the nations are given him for the portion of his inheritance, and the strong and mighty kingdoms of the world, rescued from the tyranny of Satan, shall become his; because for them, though they knew him not, he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with

transgressors and melefactors, and bare the sin of Adam and all his posterity ; and being hereby exalted to the throne of God, there continueth ever to make intercession for you, and for me, and for all transgressors.—

This view of things so affected the nobleman, and the love of his Saviour thus dying for him, took such entire possession of his soul, that when, by the direction of the same good providence that superintended this whole affair, “they came,” as they journeyed on, “to a certain water, he said,” in transport, “see, here is water ; what doth hinder me to be baptized into the name of this JESUS, whom thou preachest ? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered, and said, I believe that JESUS is the Son of GOD. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more.” How careful ought we to be to snatch, and improve to the utmost, every opportunity of making our calling and election sure ? How watchful, lest the day of salvation pass unheeded away, and the Sun of Righteousness set upon our impenitence and unbelief ? Philip had other work in great abundance to do, and one sermon had converted the nobleman.—“He went on his way rejoicing,” full of joy in the Holy Ghost ; and he who came from Ethiopia, lord treasurer to queen Candace, made his entrance into it again in a far different character, that of an apostle of Jesus Christ ; for as such, the ecclesiastical historians inform us, he was commissioned to preach the gospel to his countrymen, the truth of which he finally sealed with his blood. In heaven he again beholds the face of his old pastor, and father in Christ. Numbered with the saints of the Most High in glory everlasting, with what pleasure do they now look back upon the time they spent together in the chariot, over the 53d chapter of Isaiah ; that small portion of time, productive of so much never-ending joy and comfort to them both !

And now, let us make a suitable application of this delightful and profitable part of sacred story.

When, therefore, we behold this great man laying aside the cares of state, and turning his back on the pomps and vanities of a court, set out from a far distant land to pay a visit to



the temple at Jerusalem, learn we duly to prize the inestimable blessings of church communion. The hill of Sion is a fair place, the joy of the whole earth. On its top, silent and refreshing as the dew, descend the influences of heaven, and the benedictions of eternity: at its foot break forth the fresh springs of divine grace, sending abroad the waters of comfort into every land. The Lord hath chosen Sion to be an habitation for himself; he hath reared his throne of glory in the midst of her, and made her to be the residence of his Spirit. The Lord is in his holy temple. There will he be found of such as diligently seek him: there is he to be worshipped with holy worship: there is offered the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, rendered acceptable through the meritorious righteousness of the Redeemer, that sweet incense which accompanies the prayers of all saints to the throne of grace: there the light of evangelical doctrine goeth not out: and there is set forth the shew-bread of eternal life. Who can wonder at the melting strains poured forth by devout and holy souls, excluded, in calamitous times, from a participation of such invaluable privileges?—"O how amiable are thy dwellings, thou Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." How happy is our lot, who have not a journey from Ethiopia to take, in order to worship at Jerusalem, but hear the daily call of the church sounding in our ears; "Come unto him all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and he will give you rest." Blessed are they who know the joyful sound, and suffer no indulgence, no amusement, no employment, to prevent their accepting so friendly and loving an invitation.

Let a sight of this nobleman's great love of the scriptures, thus rewarded by a manifestation of the Messiah to him, stir us up to aspire after the same reward, by a like ardent desire of understanding those holy books, which, when understood, will not fail to lead us to Christ.—"He is the end of the law; and to him give all the prophets witness:" so that whether Philip had found the nobleman reading in one or the other, he would have "begun at the same scripture, and preached unto him JESUS." And the minister of Christ, who writes after his copy, shall do well. He may not perhaps be able to explain the whole: but shall he

therefore explain none? He may err in the interpretation of particulars, and fancy he finds Christ where he is not to be found; but is not this better than, by ceasing to interpret, to preclude the possibility of finding him where he certainly is? If the doctrine deduced be according to the analogy of faith, the sermon will be edifying, even although the exposition should not be quite exact, as is often the case in the homilies of the fathers; which, with all their inaccuracies, no one can read without being a better man; because, whatever part of the scriptures be the subject, the reader is always sure to find some point of Christian faith or practice explained and enforced. But if the application of the scriptures to Christ and the concerns of his church be rejected, because some are unskilful in making it, an argument is drawn from the abuse of a thing against its use; the opinion and practice of the church for 1700 years set aside; the Bible sealed up; and the Christian commences Jew: for what is the characteristic and fundamental error of that unhappy people, but the not discerning Jesus of Nazareth in the scriptures of the OLD Testament? If the ministers of the gospel would make the hearts of their hearers to burn within them, it must be by an imitation of their blessed Master, who wrought that effect on the two disciples going to Emaus, by “expounding unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning HIMSELF—Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he OPENED to us the SCRIPTURES?” Permit me to recite a short passage from the writings of the learned and pious Bishop Andrews, who thus accounts for the synonymous use of the words *prophesying* and *preaching*, in the New Testament language. “We (says he, that is, the ministers of the Christian church) do prophesy, as it were, the meaning of ancient prophecies: not make any new, but interpret the old well: take off the veil of Moses’ face, find Christ and the mysteries of the gospel under the types of the law; apply the old prophecies, so as it may appear that the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of JESUS. And he is the best prophet now, that can do this best.”\*

But the history we have been considering, recommends more peculiarly to our frequent perusal, and deepest meditations, that portion of holy writ, which was made the instru-

\* Serm. on Acts ii. 16, &c.

ment, in St. Philip's hands, of bringing the Ethiopian nobleman to the knowledge and faith of Christ, the 53d chapter of Isaiah; a chapter, no less remarkable for the mighty and wonderful change effected by it in the heart of another nobleman, of our own country. For in the sermon preached at the funeral of that extraordinary sinner, and as extraordinary penitent, the Earl of Rochester, we find the following striking and affecting relation:—"This estate of mind continued, till the 53d chapter of Isaiah was read to him, wherein there is a lively description of the sufferings of our Saviour, and the benefits thereof; by the power and efficacy of which, assisted by his Holy Spirit, God so wrought upon his heart, that he declared, the mysteries of the passion appeared as plain to him, as ever any thing did that was represented in a glass; so that the joy and admiration, which possessed his soul upon the reading God's word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had so much delight in his testimonies, that he begged the same might be read to him frequently; and was unsatisfied, notwithstanding his great pains and weakness, till he had learned the 53d chapter of Isaiah without book." Let us therefore at all seasons, but more especially at the present, by a frequent perusal of this wonderful chapter, recollect our thoughts, and compose our spirits, and soften our hearts, and mortify our passions, and fix our affections on him who loved us, and for our sakes fasted, and mourned, and wept, and lived poor, and died forsaken.—"Let us also go (as St. Thomas once said), that we may die with him;" that being baptized in the baptism of repentance, as the eunuch was by Philip in the water, we may die to sin, and arise, as he did, to newness of life, with our understandings prepared to receive, our hearts to love, and our tongues to publish the truth; our hands to work out our salvation, and our feet to run with delight the way of God's commandments, though it lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. Thus we shall go on our way to heaven rejoicing in hope, and become patient and resigned under all the tribulations we can suffer, for our hope's sake. A mournful *Lent* shall terminate in a joyful *Easter*; and every tear be wiped away at the resurrection of the just; when we shall meet St. Philip and his convert, with all those who, having performed their appointed penance in this world, are admitted to the communion of the church

triumphant; to which God of his infinite mercy vouchsafe to bring us all, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, the end of the law, and the fulness of the gospel.

## DISCOURSE XVI.

JESUS RISEN.

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*The Lord is risen indeed.*—Luke xxiv. 34.

OUR meditations, for this week past, have been employed on the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God, undergone for the sins of the world. We have viewed him sold, betrayed, denied, mocked, scourged, reviled, and evil entreated, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross; from thence taken down, and laid in the grave, as a man that had been long dead; a large stone placed at the mouth of the sepulchre, properly sealed, and the watch carefully set. During the solemn commemoration of those days, in which the bridegroom was thus taken away, the mirth of tabrets hath ceased, and the noise of them that rejoice hath given place to the penitential accents of grief and lamentation. For a little season, even the sacred music of the church hath not been heard; but her harp also, like that of holy Job, “hath been turned to mourning, and her organ into the voice of them that weep;”<sup>\*</sup> while either, with one of the Mary’s, she hath stood under the cross, or watched, with the other, at the grave of her Lord.

But as a woman, who in her travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come, yet afterward remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world; with such unfeigned exultation do we on this day celebrate the second birth of the Holy Jesus from the tomb; by which he realized to his desponding disciples, in a peculiar manner, one of his own beatitudes;—“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!” Blessed are they who have

<sup>\*</sup> Job xxx. 31.



mourned for the death of Christ, and the sins which occasioned it; for they are the persons who will be comforted by the tidings of his resurrection; their sorrow will indeed be turned into joy, when they hear that their warfare is accomplished, that their iniquity is pardoned: since he, who died for their sins, is risen again for their justification. Deservedly, therefore, hath this ever been esteemed the queen of festivals, worthy to give laws to the rest, to appear at the head of the holy band, crowned with everlasting joy, and hailed by incessant hallelujahs. For now it will becometh us to obey that injunction, issued of old from the Lord, by his prophet Isaiah;—"Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth, break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."\* Let songs of praise, therefore, fill the heavens, from the comforted spirits of just men made perfect, of patriarchs, and prophets, and saints, upon this triumph of their God, whom they waited for. Let the inhabitants of the earth diffuse in loud acclamations the glorious name of the mighty Conqueror, who, by *his* resurrection, hath procured and given an earnest of their own. Let Meunt Sion and all her sister churches break forth into singing, and utter the praises of him who hath delivered them from the curse of the law, and from the guilt of sin, and from the power of the second death, as well as from the dominion of the first. Let the Gentile world, and every tree of righteousness planted therein, burst out into fruits of praise and thanksgiving for this great manifestation of the power and glory of God, in the redemption of our nature from the grave.—Such be the joy produced in heaven and in earth, among angels and men, Jews and Gentiles, by the tidings of this day, "The Lord is risen indeed."

The province allotted me at present is, to display the grounds and reasons of this general joy, or to state the evidence for the fact which gives occasion to it, namely, the resurrection of Jesus our Lord from the dead; which being the key-stone of the Christian fabric, and the foundation of all our hopes, it must always be a task no less profitable than delightful, to establish so important and comfortable a doctrine upon its proper basis.

\* Isa. xliv. 23.

The evidence for the resurrection of Christ is of two kinds, predictive and historical. From the Old Testament it appears, that Messiah was to rise; from the New, that Jesus of Nazareth did rise, and therefore is the Messiah.

Among the predictive witnesses, the first place is due to that ancient and venerable order of men, styled patriarchs, or heads of families, whose lives and actions, as well as their words, were descriptive of the person, in faith of whom they lived and acted, instructing, interceding for, and conducting their dependents, as representative prophets, priests, and kings; looking forward unto the Author and Finisher of their faith and ours, who, by dying and rising again, was to exhibit to the world the divine fulness of all these characters; to teach, to atone, to reign; to bruise the serpent's head; to comfort the sons of Adam concerning the work and toil of their hands; to gather and to bless the nations. The extraordinary incidents with which the history of these holy persons aboundeth, the frequent revolutions of their affairs from the depth of adversity to the height of prosperity, brought about by the remarkable interpositions of heaven in their favour, naturally direct our attention to parallel circumstances in the after dispensations of God, to which foregoing ones were designed to bear testimony. In this light, the history of Isaac, intentionally offered in sacrifice, and received again from the dead, in a figure; of Joseph, suffering persecution from his brethren, and by them sold into the hands of strangers, but afterward taken from prison and from judgment, exalted to power and honour, and becoming the preserver of men; and under the Mosaic dispensation, the history of David, anointed to the kingdom, but wading through a sea of troubles and sorrows to the possession of it; of Samson arising at midnight, dismantling the fortifications of the city where he was confined as a prisoner, and leading captivity captive; together with the accounts of many other temporal saviours and deliverers raised up unto Israel in time of need, to rescue them from the oppression of their enemies; all these histories have been, from the beginning, considered as bearing an aspect to the exaltation of mankind from misery and shame to felicity and glory, through the sufferings and resurrection of the Son of God, the Champion of the church, and Redeemer of the world. And, considered in this view, they

will always afford matter of instruction, of wonder, and delight, to the pious and discerning Christian.

In the class of the predictive witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, the second place is claimed by the law. Nor will its claim be disputed by any one, who shall reflect, that it prophesied until John, executing the office of a schoolmaster, to lead men, by material elements and rudiments, to an apprehension of the spiritual ideas signified and conveyed thereby, until the Baptist succeeded it in that office; who, pointing to Jesus as he walked, spake the language of its institutions, when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." And, indeed, when, after the sacramental atonement made by the death of the innocent victim, we see the Levitical High Priest arrayed in the garments of glory and beauty; when we behold him purifying all the parts of the figurative tabernacle with blood, and then entering, within the veil, into the holiest of all, to present that propitiating blood before the offended Majesty of heaven; is it possible, even though an apostle had not applied all these circumstances for us, to detain the imagination a moment from fixing itself on the great High Priest of our profession; the plenary satisfaction made on the cross; his resurrection in an immortal body, no more to stand charged with sin, no more to see corruption; the purification of the church by his precious blood; his ascension into heaven, and intercession for us, in the presence of God? Again, when we read the command given to the priest, that, on the morrow after the sabbath, he should wave a sheaf of the first fruits,\* as an earnest and sanctification of the future harvest; doth it not immediately suggest to us, that, on the same day, on the morrow after the sabbath, Christ arose from the dead, and became the first fruits of them that slept, the sanctification and earnest of that harvest which shall be at the end of the world; at which time he, who, in the days of his flesh, went on weeping,—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, bearing forth the precious seed of the word of life, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Nor can we, it is apprehended, peruse the account of the flowering rod of Aaron, deposited in the most holy place, for a perpetual memorial of the investiture

\* Lev. xxiii. 11.

of the priesthood in him and his family,\* without being led to reflect on the ascertainment of the eternal Melchisedekian priesthood to the person of Christ, by the refflorescence of that mortal part, which he drew from the stem of Jesse, and which hath now taken up its residence in heaven itself, being an everlasting memorial to God and man, of the true and availing priesthood and intercession of the Holy Jesus.

Next to the patriarchs and the law, the prophets press for admittance, to deliver their testimony; for “the testimony of Jesus (as saith the angel in the Revelation) is the spirit of prophecy.”† Some of these give their evidence in the ancient way of figure and emblem; others, with less reserve, in express literal declarations. Of the former kind is that of Jonah, devoted for the safety of the vessel in which he sailed, detained three days in what he styleth “the belly of hell,” and then restored to the world again, to preach repentance to the heathen; circumstances too plain and striking to need any comment, after that given by our Lord himself;—“As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”‡ Of a like nature is that vision of Zechariah,§ in which he seeth Joshua the high priest clothed with filthy garments, which are taken from him, and he is clothed with change of raiment, and other sacerdotal ornaments, denoting the purity and glory of Christ, when our iniquity passed from him, and he arose, without sin, unto salvation. And thus, again, the prophecy of Haggai, that the “glory of the latter house should be greater than that of the former,”|| is as true of the temple of our Lord’s body, after his resurrection, compared with that before his death, as it is of the second material temple, compared with the first, on account of the presence of God incarnate in the one, which was not in the other. Hosea delivers a prediction of the restoration of the church then oppressed and afflicted, in terms literally applicable to the virtual resurrection of the members in the head of the church.—“Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up; after two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we

\* See Numb. xvii.

† Rev. xix. 10.

‡ Matt. xii. 40.

§ See Zech. iii.

|| Haggai ii. 9.



shall live in his sight.”\* But Isaiah is very explicit, and saith, in the person of Christ addressing himself to the church ;—“ Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise ; awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”† And, elsewhere, discoursing of the Messiah, he foretelleth expressly, that “ when he had made his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands ; that he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied ; that because he had poured out his soul unto death, God would afterward give him a portion with the great.”‡ I shall close the predictive evidence with the famous passage from the 16th Psalm.—“ Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption : thou wilt shew me the path of life ;” where, as St. Peter assureth us, in his sermon, Acts xi. David spake not in his own person, but, “ being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne, he seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.”

A fact of so extraordinary a nature as the resurrection of a body from the dead, predicted, as we have seen, at sundry times and in divers manners, by the patriarchs, the law, and the prophets, cannot be supposed to have happened without sufficient witnesses of its accomplishment. These are now to be collected, and made to pass in due order before us.

And, first, we shall cite heaven and earth to give in their evidence ; for both of them perceived the power of their Lord at his rising, and both proclaimed it to the inhabitants of the world, by those awful signs and appearances, which ushered in the morning of the resurrection. At the time foreappointed in the divine counsels, “ the angel of the Lord descended from heaven,” bringing with him a strange and more glorious dayspring, his brightness covering the heavens, and enlightening the world.—“ His countenance (saith St. Matthew) was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow ;” all purity, and joy, and triumph, and glory.

\* Hosca vi. 1, 2.

† Isa. xxvi. 19.

‡ Isa. liii.

At this manifestation of splendour and majesty from heaven, the earth trembled and quaked, as declaring itself unable any longer to detain the body which had been committed to it for a little season.—“Behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.” At the instant of this universal commotion, the blessed Jesus, awakening right early from that which was but a sleep to him, and will be no more to us who believe in him, left the bed of death. He arose, and came forth, almighty, all glorious, fresh as the light of the morning, as a bridegroom proceeding out of his chamber, as a strong man prepared to run his course; and saying, or seeming to say, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”\*

The next witnesses which appear in favour of the resurrection, are the holy angels. For as the devout women, who came betimes in the morning, with a pious but needless care, to perform the last instance of duty and affection to the body of their Lord, were much perplexed at what they saw; lo, two of the inhabitants of heaven, ever rejoicing to minister to the heirs of salvation, appeared in robes of glory, and reproved them for expecting to find their Master among the tombs, as if it were possible that he should be holden of death, who was to give life to all.—“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen. Remember how he spake unto you, when he was yet in Galilee, saying, the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”† As if they had said, “How long will ye be ignorant of the divine dispensations concerning the Messiah, and continue seeking the Lord of life in the regions of death? He died, indeed, unto sin once, as he told you he should; but do you not bear in mind what he told you at the same time, that, after payment of the debt, he should be released from prison, naming the very day of his discharge, the third day, which is now come. He is risen, as he said; and, being so risen, he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, nor hath he any farther connexions with mortality.” The same heavenly messengers were seen by Mary Magdalen in the sepulchre, arrayed in white, and

\* Rev. i. 18.

† Luke xxiv. 5.

sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. The grave was now rendered a scene of joy and triumph, where Christ had overcome the sharpness of death; and where, from thenceforth, the bodies of the faithful rest in peace, under the care of heaven, till the general resurrection; when they shall become as the angels of God, and shall "walk with him in white."\*

As one set of witnesses descended from above, to bear testimony to the resurrection of Jesus, so others ascended, for the same purpose, from the lower parts of the earth. For "many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."† The astonishment produced in Jerusalem by the sudden appearance of these new and unexpected evidences, is more easily conceived than expressed. We may only observe, that if this fact had not been as the gospel represents it, it must have exposed the inventors of the tale to utter scorn and contempt, and proved the ruin of the cause which it was intended to support.

But it is time to allege the many appearances of Christ himself, after his resurrection, to Mary Magdalen apart; to the other devout women with her; to the two going to Emmaus; to St. Peter, to St. James, to the eleven; to "above five hundred brethren at once;" to St. Stephen, just before his martyrdom; and to St. Paul, at his conversion. And so far were these witnesses of the appearances of Christ from being credulous, that they were altogether sceptical; God having in a wonderful manner provided for the confirmation of our faith, but suffering them to doubt to the last. For not only the reports of those who had seen him were disbelieved by those who had not, but when he presented himself in the midst of the eleven, they could not credit their own senses. And when all the rest were convinced, Thomas still stood out, till ocular and palpable demonstration forced from him that ever memorable confession, MY LORD, AND MY GOD! "Thus was there no capacity of mankind, no time, no place, but had visible proof of the resurrection of Christ. He appeared to men and women, to clergy and laity, to sinners of both sexes; to weak men and to criminals, to doubters and deniers, at home and abroad, in public and in private, in their houses and their journeys,

\* Rev. iii. 4.

† Matt. xxvii. 52.

unexpected and by appointment, betimes in the morning, and late at night, to his disciples in conjunction, and to them in dispersion, when they did look for him, and when they did not; he appeared upon earth to many, and to St. Paul and St. Stephen from heaven. So that we can require no greater testimony than all these are able to give us, who saw for themselves and for us too; that the faith and certainty of the resurrection of Jesus might be conveyed to all ages and generations."

To enable the apostle thus to convey it, the spirit of truth himself set his seal to this article of our creed, by coming down upon them on the day of Pentecost, and bestowing on them wisdom to teach, power to confirm, and patience to suffer for the doctrine of the resurrection, until, converted by their preaching, the nations of the earth bore universal testimony to the reality thereof. For that "a religion which taught men to be meek and humble, disposed to receive injuries, but not to do any; a religion which gave countenance to the poor and lowly, at a time when riches were adored, and ambition and pleasure had possessed the hearts of all mankind; that such a religion, in such an age, by the sermons and conduct of fishermen, men of mean breeding and illiberal arts, should so speedily triumph over the philosophy of the world, and the arguments of the subtle, and the discourses of the eloquent; the power of princes and the interests of states; the inclinations of nature and the blindness of zeal; the force of custom and the solicitation of passions; the pleasures of sin and the busy arts of the devil; that is, against wit and power, superstition and wilfulness, fame and money, nature and empire, which are all the causes in this world that can make a thing impossible; this, this is to be ascribed to the power of God, and is the great demonstration of the resurrection of Jesus. Every thing was an argument for it, and improved it; no objection could hinder it, no enemies destroy it; whatsoever was for it, made the religion to increase; whatsoever was against it, made it to increase. If the Christians had peace, they went abroad and brought in converts; if they had persecution, the converts came in to them. In prosperity they allured and enticed the world by the beauty of holiness; in affliction and trouble they amazed all men with the splendour of their innocence, and the glories of their patience. Quickly therefore it was, that



the world became disciple to the glorious Nazarene, and men could no longer doubt of the resurrection of Jesus, when it became demonstrated by the certainty of those who saw it, and the courage of those who died for it, and the multitude of those who believed it; who, by their sermons and their actions, by their public offices and discourses, by festivals and sacraments, by arguments of sense and experience, by reason and religion, by persuading rational men, and establishing believing Christians, by their living in the obedience, and dying for the testimony of Jesus, have greatly advanced his kingdom, and his power, and his glory, into which he entered, upon his resurrection from the dead.”\*

Thus we have taken such a view, as the usual time allotted to discourses of this kind will allow us to take, of the evidence for our Lord's resurrection, predictive and historical; to the completion of which, it is hard to conceive any thing wanting, unless it were the testimony of the adversary to the truth of the disputed fact, by the futility of an objection started to overthrow it. And with this proof likewise the Roman guard, under the direction of the Jewish rulers, has thought proper to furnish us.—“The disciples, say they, came by night, and stole him away, while we slept.” The *disciples* came and stole the body! They, who all forsook their Master at his apprehension, and fled; they, who, from that time, had absconded, for fear of the Jews, without hope, without courage, without contrivance, became all at once subtle in counsel, and daring in execution. They projected a plan to displace the guard, break the seal, remove the stone, and rescue the body, in order to persuade the world, that their Master was risen from the dead. And all this they effected, not with the precipitation of men engaged in a bad design, who feared a discovery, and would therefore have hastily seized the body, wrapped as it was in the sepulchral vestments, but, with all the composed sedulity of domestics,

\* Bishop Taylor's “Moral Demonstration of the Truth of Christianity,” republished, since this Discourse was written, by a learned and amiable prelate of our church. May it meet with the success it deserves; for no tract ever came from the pen of man, better calculated to dispel those doubts and difficulties which may arise in the mind of a believer, or to work conviction and conversion in that of the unbeliever, who can bring himself to give it a fair and attentive perusal. This has ever appeared to me to be its true character, since the hour when, with equal surprise and pleasure, I first met with it, where it so long lay hidden from the fashionable world, in the *Ductor Dubitantium*.

carefully disentangling it from the linen clothes, and then depositing them in the exactest order. It is now proper to inquire, where were the soldiers, appointed to watch the sepulchre, all this while? What were they doing? The answer is ready;—they were asleep. Notwithstanding the rigour of the Roman discipline, and the care that would doubtless be taken to select proper men upon this great occasion, yet the disciples came and stole the body “while they slept.” But, did they indeed sleep? Did they all sleep? Determine then, ye Jews and infidels, what degree of credit is due to the testimony of men concerning what happened, when, by their own confession, they were asleep! This idle tale, which thus carries its own confutation with it, could have been the offspring only of a corrupt and infatuated Sanhedrim, to whom the watch told what had happened—not that the disciples came and stole the body while they slept—but that, while they were half dead with fear, at beholding the heavens around them in a blaze of glory, and feeling the earth under them trembling from its centre, the Galilean arose from the dead, to the confusion of all his enemies. But to stifle this evidence, and prevent the report from spreading, the soldiers had *large money* given them by the chief priests (and, indeed, the work deserved the wages) to propagate a story so absurd and shameless, that, instead of invalidating the truth of the resurrection, it is of itself sufficient to make any man believe it, who was before determined to the contrary.

If, therefore, the patriarchs, the law, and the prophets; if heaven and earth; if angels from above, and the dead from beneath; if the appearances of Christ himself on earth and from heaven; if the Spirit of truth, with all his gifts and graces; if the miracles of the apostles, the lives of saints, the sufferings of confessors, and the deaths of martyrs; if the conversion of the world to the faith of a crucified Saviour, without power, wealth, or learning; if the church, with the antiquity, universality, and consent of her institutions and services for above seventeen centuries, from the day on which Christ was first seen by the eleven after his resurrection, to this hour, in which we are now assembled for the commemoration of it; and, lastly, if the objections of the adversary establishing the truth which they were intended to subvert; that is to say, in one word, if all the

evidence which God can give, or man receive, be sufficient to prove a matter of fact; then may we evermore rejoice,—and evermore let us therefore rejoice, in all the glorious consequences of the proposition in the text—“The Lord is risen indeed.”

## DISCOURSE XVII.

### THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

*From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*—Phil. iii. 20, 21.

THE text treats of a most amazing change to be one day wrought in the bodies of men, as also of the person who is to effect it; namely, our Lord Jesus Christ. And, indeed, “we trusted it had been he who should have redeemed Israel from all his troubles.” But, are we “strangers in Jerusalem, and know not the things that have come to pass there within these days;” that this same Jesus, falsely accused, through envy, by the nobles of Judah, has been cast into the den of lions, with a stone brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and sealed with a signet, that the purpose might not be changed concerning him,\* nor any possibility remain of his escaping from thence? In this state, he is by no means able to perform the great work ascribed to him in the text. For it must be observed, that though he be indeed God over all, he is not the *Saviour*, without his *humanity*. Though the raising the dead be an act of Omnipotence, and, consequently, one which must be wrought by his Divinity, yet it is not Jesus Christ that does it, unless the Divinity does it in Jesus. And thus the text runs—“We look for the Saviour, *the Lord Jesus*.” But, from whence do we look for him? From the sepulchre? No:

\* Dan. vi. 17.

from heaven;—"Our conversation is in *heaven*, from *whence* we look for the Saviour." Surely then "the God whom he served has delivered him from the power of the lions."\* Surely "the king has sent and delivered him, the prince of the people has let him go free."† "He is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and he is delivered,"‡ and fled away toward heaven. For how should a person, once laid in the grave, come from heaven, unless he were first risen, and ascended thither? Four days ago he was carried captive into the kingdom of death, and confined in that strong city, the grave; and now we look for him to come from heaven. For thus doth the prophet Isaiah most magnificently describe him returning to his capital, from the land of the enemy, after his passion;—"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."§ Well, therefore, may we "look for the Saviour from heaven," for there most certainly he is. And from thence, as the text affirms, he shall as certainly come, to raise us. He, who died on the cross to redeem, who rose from the sepulchre to justify, and who sent his spirit from heaven to sanctify our souls, he, even he, shall come to glorify our bodies, and finish his work. And then shall we hear "from the throne the voice of mighty thunders, saying, it is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely." May we not, therefore, address the world in the words of Moses' divine song, and say, "Give ear, O ye heavens, and he will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of his mouth. His doctrine shall drop as the rain, and his speech shall distil as the dew;"|| for, as it is elsewhere written, his "dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."¶ The dew, like himself, arises from earth, but we look for it from heaven; "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself."

\* Dan. vi. 22. 27.

† Ps. cv. 20.

‡ Ps. cxxiv. 7.

§ Isa. lxiii. 1.

|| Deut. xxxii. 1:

¶ Isa. xxvi. 19.



Let us then consider Christ coming from heaven as a *Saviour*.

Man consists of two parts, both of which stand in need of a Saviour, because both fell, and became subject to the destroyer. The salvation here spoken of is plainly the salvation of the body, not excluding that of the soul, but perfective of it. For if Christ be here denominated a Saviour, because he comes to change the body, then is he here spoken of as the Saviour of the body, which he comes to change. Now, a Saviour is one that delivers us from our enemies, as it is written—"He hath raised up an horn of *salvation* for us,—that we should be saved from our enemies."\* But the enemy that destroys the body, is death; and, therefore, the body cannot be saved from that enemy without a resurrection; nor can Christ be its Saviour, unless he raise it from the dead. But the apostle here styles him the Saviour, with respect to the body; therefore, he will be its "resurrection and its life; and whosoever believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Indeed, the work of redemption is left unfinished, if this be not the case. For, notwithstanding the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, "the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together, until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."† This, and this only, crowns and makes effectual the labours of the Redeemer.—"For this end (says the apostle) Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord, both of the dead, and of the living."‡ And, again, "he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he has given assurance unto all men, in that he raised him from the dead."§ Christ was incarnate, that he might die; he died, that he might rise; he arose, that he might ascend; he ascended, that he might take possession of his kingdom; and he took possession of his kingdom, that he might raise the dead, and judge the world.—"The God of our fathers (says St. Peter) raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, him hath God exalted with his right hand"—for what end?—"To be a

\* Luke i. 69—71.

† Rom. xiv. 9.

‡ Rom. viii. 22.

§ Acts xvii. 31.

Prince, and a Saviour.”\* He, therefore, that has “done so great things for us already, whereof we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice,” will never leave us in our enemy’s hand, but “shall reign till he has put all enemies under his feet;” and we know, “the last enemy that shall be destroyed is DEATH.”

Again.—He who is eternal truth, and who promised to raise Christ, has promised to raise us. He has fulfilled one part of his promise, and, therefore, will accomplish the other.

Nor is this all. But such is the intimate union between Christ and us, that his resurrection in effect is ours, and we are looked upon by our heavenly Father as already risen in his beloved Son. For we must consider Christ as suffering and rising, not for himself alone, but for us. We must not view him as a private person, as a single individual, but as the representative and substitute of human nature, and of all the persons in that nature; we must view him as the second Adam, containing in his loins all who are, or shall be, born of the will of God, of incorruptible seed, by spiritual regeneration; as in the loins of the first Adam lay all his posterity, afterward born of the will of man, of corruptible seed, by natural generation. In this capacity, as surety and father of us all, he entered the grave, and lay under the arrest of death, for our sin; and in this capacity he arose from the grave, and came forth, for our justification; that as “IN Adam all died, even so IN Christ should all be made alive.” The words, therefore, which he spake, are fulfilled;—“Because I live, ye shall live also.”† For, if Christ be risen in our nature, then our nature is risen in Christ; and if our nature be risen, then they who partake of that nature shall rise too. We are, as the apostle speaks, *συνφυτοί*, “planted together in the likeness of his death,” that we may grow together “in the likeness of his resurrection.” He *for* us, and we *in* him; that “the same Spirit which raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, may also quicken our mortal bodies.”‡ For who amongst us ever heard of a living head joined to dead members? Now, that he is joined to us is most certain. For when the foot was bruised on earth, the head from heaven cried out, as sensible of the pain, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?” The head,

\* Acts v. 30.

† John xiv. 19.

‡ Rom. viii. 11.

lifted up from the waters which had overwhelmed it, drew in the breath of the spirit of life, for the enlivening and invigorating every member of the body. And though the members are, as yet, wading through those waters, and being covered with the waves, live only by their vital union with the exalted head, yet have they this promise, on which they may with confidence rely—"I, when I am lifted up, will draw all men unto me."\* The apostle observes, that "if any one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."† How much more must this be the case, when "the head is become as the most fine gold, and on it are many crowns;" when "all the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and his Christ;" which Christ is "the head of the church, and he is the Saviour of the body." It is an acknowledged axiom, that as is the root, such are the branches. If then the root, though set in dry ground, yet through the influences of heaven, and the water of life, became full of immortality, how shall not the branches partake of that immortality which the root receives, only to bestow it upon them, as it is written;—"The Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself, that he should give eternal life to as many as he has given him."‡ He is the root, we are the branches. He is the first begotten from the dead: therefore others, whom "he is not ashamed to call brethren," shall be begotten from the dead, and declared the sons of God, as he was, by their resurrection, and the power of the Almighty. Many other scripture illustrations of the same point might be adduced; but these are sufficient. Well then might the apostle argue, as he does, in that truly irrefragable manner;—"Now, if Christ be preached, that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But, if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also, which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men

\* John xii. 32.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 26.

‡ John xvii. 2.

most miserable. But now, is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." The first fruits are presented by the great high priest.—"The morning after the sabbath he waved them before Jehovah." Then the heavens were bowed, and the earth shook. And meet it was, when the sheaf of Joseph thus arose and stood upright, that every sheaf in the field should make obeisance,\* that every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord;† that he is the *first fruits*, foreshowing, sanctifying, and insuring that future harvest, which will be at the end of the world; that he is the first fruits of them that *slept*, and, therefore, that they who are in the graves "are not dead, but sleep;" and "if they sleep in him, they shall do well." For yet a little while, and he will call from heaven to his people, saying, in the words of his prophets—"Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust," and let the voice of melody be heard through all the chambers of the grave:—"Awake up, my glory, awake lute and harp; awake, thou that sleepest; shake thyself from the dust; awake, awake, utter a song; break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? I will redeem them from death, I will ransom them from the power of the grave; O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. I am Jehovah, and change not."

But how is this salvation to be effected? The text expresses it by a *change*;—"Who shall change our vile body." And otherwise than by a change from the state in which it is, to one very different, the deliverance cannot be wrought; since the subject of it is a body now *vile*. In the original it is *σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως ἡμῶν*, *the body of our humiliation*. Humiliation implies a fall from some higher state. And such a fall our nature has sustained. For though the body of man was originally formed out of the earth, it was of the earth, before the curse of corruption was inflicted upon it.—"God created man to be *immortal*, and made him an image of his own *eternity*." Other things were produced by the word of his power, but man by the counsel of the eternal Three, who said, "Let us make man." The work-

\* Gen. xxxvii. 7.

† Phil. ii. 10.



manship ennobled the materials; the hand of the Almighty bestowed perfection as it passed upon them, and the creature rose under it, beautiful in his form, excellent in his glory, the most perfect image of his Maker. There was no seed of corruption within, to cause disease and deformity without; no contending passions in the soul, like moths to fret and wear out its garment, the body. The soul, clothed with the Spirit of holiness, was all glorious within, and could not but communicate some portion of its excellence to its earthly tabernacle, thereby rendering matter a fit companion for an upright spirit, breathed into it from above. God made not sin, neither hath he pleasure in the punishment of it. But man chose it. And behold what destruction it hath brought upon the earth, and upon our body formed out of it. What dreadful attendants has this ravager of the world introduced! Corruption, and shame, and misery, and trouble, and infirmity, and deformity, and sorrow and death. The soul is become a sea, whereon the passions, like winds, strive for the mastery, shaking the earthly frame with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death. It is now “a body of sin;” and what wonder, that it should be a “body of humiliation?” Sin has laid it low, even to the dust. Pamper it with the luxuries of sea and land, array it in gold and diamonds, it will be still the same. Only undraw the curtains of affliction, and you view it languishing upon the bed of sickness; unlock the doors of the grave, or enter the secret recesses of the charnel-house, and you behold it stripped of the world’s tinsel pomps and vanities, reduced to putrid flesh, mouldering dust, and dry bones; no longer able to disguise or disown its original; brought at last to know itself, and introduced to an acquaintance proper for it,—“earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Here then, O thou, whosoever thou art, that delightest to contemplate the dignity and rectitude of human nature, here sit down, and begin thy meditations. Is it thus, that virtue is its own reward? Or say, is the body no part of the man? If it be, why is it in this state? Or, how is it to be changed? Men talk much of the *moral sense*. Can the *moral sense* acquaint us with the resurrection of the dead? *Reason* is placed on the throne, and her kingdom, it is said, ruleth over all. Can *reason* discover the change of corruption into glory? We

know she cannot; and when she spake upon the subject at Athens, her language was,—“What will this babbler say?”

Nay, since that time, we have heard her muttering from the dust, by the mouth of certain philosophers—“How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?” With what body, O man, should they come, but the body with which they went? What body should be raised from the grave, but the body that was laid in the grave? Had we seen Joseph of Arimathea deposit the Redeemer of the world in the sepulchre, and been told, that Redeemer should arise again, could any one have thought of asking, “with what body he should come?” Whether with the body which he had, when he went with his parents to Jerusalem, at twelve years old; or the body he had at twenty; or the body he had at thirty, when he began his ministry? Upon this subject two men of equal abilities might dispute, if they were to live so long, till Christ came in the clouds to judgment, and found them doubting whether he was risen or not, because they could not conceive with what body he should rise, or how it was consistent with the justice of God, to raise and reward one body only, when, as they apprehend, he was born in one body, lived in another, and suffered in a third; because, it is said, the body undergoes a thorough change in a certain term of years. This metaphysical argument, therefore, though seemingly no more than a difficulty proposed as to the manner of our resurrection, really strikes at the truth of the article of Christ’s resurrection, and is calculated to darken the counsel and revelation of the Most High, by words without knowledge: so much without knowledge, that the plain matter of fact is a sufficient answer. Jesus Christ was laid in the sepulchre, and the same Jesus Christ arose out of the sepulchre. And if it were so with his natural body, why should it be otherwise with his mystical? The scriptures are clear that it will not. For as they who are alive at Christ’s coming, are to be “changed in the twinkling of an eye;” and consequently, that body must be changed which is found at the instant of his coming, and no other; so they that are in their graves shall come forth to be changed likewise; and consequently, those bodies only must be changed that were laid in the graves. —“Who shall change our vile body,” says the text: there-

fore the vile body must be there, to be changed. Otherwise it would not be a *change*, μετασχηματισις, a *transformation*, or *transfiguration*, of vile into glorious, but a *substitution* of glorious for vile. It is *this* mortal, and *this* corruptible—*τουτο το θνητον*—this very mass of mortality and corruption. “IT is sown, IT it raised.” The same, in short, may be said to these objectors, which Christ said to the Sadducees upon a like occasion—“Ye do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” For if you knew the power of God, you would know that he *can* do it; and if you knew the scriptures, you would know that he *will* do it. And if they say he will do it, all the objections in the world show but one thing, namely, “an evil heart of unbelief” in the objectors. For since the scriptures (and particularly the process in Ezekiel’s vision of the resurrection) plainly show, that the body is first to be raised, and all the parts of it put together, before the change takes place, nothing remains, but an atheistical denial of *the power of God* to collect the parts and put them together; a denial, that he who made all things of impalpable dust, and beheld the substance of the world, before two atoms of it were joined; who formed the body of man out of those created for that purpose, and dissolves and disperses them at pleasure; a denial that he can collect them again when dispersed; a denial that the Almighty can do this. Only suppose a man not ignorant of the power of God, and all difficulties vanish. For then, whether the dust lie quiet in the grave, or be blown to the four winds, or be entombed in a whale, or buried in the great deep, it is equally under the eye of the Omniscient, and the power of the Omnipotent. These are all his storehouses and repositories, to be opened by him who has the keys of hell and death, when the sea shall deliver up the dead that are in it, and death and hell deliver up the dead that are in them: when, as the same Jonas came out of the whale, and the same Son of man from the heart of the earth, so the same bodies of saints, that laid down at night, shall arise in the morning. God is not unrighteous, that he should forget the body’s work and labour of love. From those eyes, which have poured forth tears of repentance, shall all tears be wiped, and they shall be blessed with the vision of the Almighty. Those hands which have been lifted up in

prayer, and stretched out to the poor, shall hold the palm of victory and harp of joy. Those feet which have wearied themselves in going about to do good, shall stand in the courts of the Lord, and walk in the garden of God, and in the streets of the New Jerusalem. That flesh, which has been chastised and mortified, shall be rewarded for what it has suffered; nay, the very hairs of our heads are all numbered: how much more then, the parts of our bodies? —“ This (says the *Resurrection* himself) is my Father’s will that has sent me, that of ALL which he has given me, ΠΑΝ ὃ δέδωκε μοι, I should lose nothing, but raise IT up at the last day.”\* We might indeed follow the objectors to the resurrection into the cold obscure of metaphysic. But what has been alleged from the scriptures, and the power of God revealed in those scriptures (the only topics of argumentation upon subjects of this nature), overturns the foundation of every thing the objectors have to offer; and it will, I presume, be much more profitable to lay open from the scriptures the manner in which this change is to be wrought.

The greatness of the change appears from this, that “ our vile body ” is to be “ fashioned like unto Christ’s glorious body.” Of this he was pleased to give a specimen to Peter, and James, and John, and in them to all his disciples, who, by faith and devotion, will accompany their Master, in “ the body of HIS humiliation,” to the top of Mount Tabor. There they may behold an ensample of this most amazing change; the power of the highest, which dwelt in Christ, diffusing itself outwardly, till he appeared all over exceeding glorious, his face shining like the sun, and his raiment becoming white as the light.† Who is not ready to say, “ It is good for us to be here, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, even the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?” But here we must not stay, because he did not. For though, at the brightness before him, the cloud passed, and the sun, for a little while, appeared in his strength, the cloud soon returned and overshadowed him, and he entered into it. He descended from the mount of transfiguration to the heart of

\* John vi. 39.

† See the resurrection of the body, in an ingenious and beautiful manner illustrated from the transfiguration of Christ, by the Reverend Mr. Holmes, in his excellent Sermon on that subject.



the earth, and then "there was darkness over all the land;" but he soon went up to an higher mountain than Tabor, was again transfigured, and introduced a day which no cloud shall ever overcast more. He became, as it was foretold that he should do, "as the light of the morning when the sun arises, even a morning without clouds."\* The world indeed sees him not; but to us, who believe, "a door is opened in heaven, and behold a throne set, like the fiery flame, and its wheels as burning fire, and one sits on it, to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone; his garment white as snow, and the hairs of his head like the pure wool; his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength."† "Beloved (says St. John), it does not yet appear what we shall be;" but this we know, that "when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and, by seeing him, be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory." He has power, as the text informs us, to subdue all things to himself, because he is the Almighty God, and this power he will exert on our bodies. Yet a little while, and he will rend the heavens, and come down, and heaven and earth will be filled with the overflowing flood of the majesty of his glory, "as the waters cover the sea;" the heavens over our heads melting away before it, and the mountains flowing down, in liquid fire, at its presence. At that instant—"when the shriek of millions, fearfully crying out, shall mingle with the trumpet of the archangel, with the thunders of the departing heavens, and the noise of a world shaking into dissolution"—at that instant, "the dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed." Changed—not by the corruptible being taken away, and the incorruptible introduced in its room, but by a superinduction of the incorruptible upon the corruptible. For thus says the apostle, "We that are in this tabernacle do groan earnestly, desiring to be *clothed upon* with our house which is from heaven. Not for that we would be *unclothed*," or lose the earthly body, "but *clothed upon*," with a superinvestiture of *the house from heaven*, namely, the divine light, which is to inwrap and invest the mortal body as a garment. And not only invest it outwardly, as a garment, but, by the divine energy of its

\* 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

† Dan. vii. 9. x. 6. Rev. i. 14.

almighty power, penetrate and pierce through and through its most intimate substance, till it has converted, subdued, worked, and changed it all into itself, so that mortality is swallowed up of life, and corruption quite absorbed and lost in the ocean of the all-encircling glory. Then shall the righteous be seen standing, victorious, through faith in Jesus, transformed (to compare the things of this world with those of another) from the darkness of dust and ashes, to the clear transparency of glass, the pure lustre of diamonds, the inconceivable agility of light, and the perfect impassibility of heaven. No reasonable man can complain, that the scriptures are not explicit enough upon the subject. But the transformation of mortality into glory is one of those things of God, which the natural man never will know or discern. Though surely, if nature teach any religion, it is the Christian; if she preach any doctrine, it is this resurrection and change. And was not the book of nature, as well as that of grace, become a sealed book, what man, that ever travelled with the earth, through the vicissitudes of a year, could deny a resurrection? Ask the furrows of the field, and they shall tell thee. For "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The parts of the seed cannot spring afresh, till they have been first dissolved. It is true, the husbandman soweth only bare grain; but it arises, "clothed upon" with a beautiful verdure. And "if God so clothe the grass of the field," how much more shall he clothe your mortal bodies with a glorious immortality, O ye of little faith? But why need we take the compass of a year? Every twenty-four hours there is a rehearsal, in nature, of man's death and resurrection. Every evening, the day, with its works, dies into darkness and the shadow of death. All colours fade, all beauty vanishes, all labour and motion cease, and every creature, veiled in darkness, mourns, in solemn silence, the interment of the world. Who would not say, "It is dead—it shall not rise!" Yet, wait only a few hours, in faith and patience, and this dead and entombed earth, by the agency of heaven upon it, shall burst asunder the bars of that sepulchral darkness, in which it was imprisoned, and "arise, and be enlightened, and its light shall come; the dayspring from on high shall visit it, and destroy the covering cast over all people," and array

universal nature with a robe of glory and beauty, raising those that sleep, to behold themselves and the world changed from darkness to light, and calling them up, to give glory to God, and think of the resurrection. Happy are they, who make this use of it! God shall help them, when that morning appeareth, of which every morning has been to them a blessed prelude; to such, day unto day uttereth the word of the everlasting gospel, and night unto night showeth the knowledge of salvation. They understand how "the heavens declare the glory of God" in the felicity of his chosen, and furnish us with some ideas of our approaching glorification. Nothing earthly can fully represent that which is changed from earthly to heavenly, for "the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead." There is one glory of the Sun of Righteousness, another glory of the moon, his church, walking in the brightness she receives from him, and another glory of the stars, his saints; for here also one star differeth from another star in glory. All stand in their order, in shining circles, round the throne of the Sun. There these morning stars sing together unto the Lord a new song, and all the sons of God, even the children of the resurrection, shout for joy; for they rest not day or night, making one sound to be heard through all the heavenly courts—Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come! Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord, Most High!

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, seeing these bodies of ours are to become instruments of glory hereafter, how ought they to be instruments of grace here? for grace is the dawn of glory, as glory is the meridian of grace. Seeing we are to have such bodies, what ought our souls to be, for whom such bodies are prepared? And how ought we to spend our short moment of probation in "cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God!" The consideration of our glorious change cannot but make our hearts to burn within us. And then is the time to reflect, that blessed is he, whose soul is changed from grace to grace, for his body shall be changed

from glory to glory. And if the soul of a Christian be ever “transformed by the renewing of his mind,” it must be, not while he is in the hurry and vanity of the world below, but when he leaves the world, and, following the steps of his dear Lord and Master, ascends, by faith, to the mount of transfiguration, and is on his knees before God, remembering it is written—“While he PRAYED, he WAS TRANSFIGURED.” Blessed therefore is he who breaks away from idle and vain conversation, to meditate in the law of God day and night; to commune with his own heart, and in his chamber; to call his past ways to remembrance, in the bitterness of his soul; to confess his wickedness, and be sorry for his sin. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,” says the world.—“Blessed are they that mourn,” says he, whom the world crucified. Let those, therefore, who enjoy a life of perfect leisure, and are continually complaining how heavy time hangs upon their hands, consider, whether they could tell, if God should call upon them at this moment, when they ever freely and voluntarily withdrew for one hour, to attend the business of changing their souls from sin to righteousness, that so their bodies may be changed from dust to glory? And if this question, from the mouth of the all-seeing Judge, will strike the unprofitable servant speechless at his footstool, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Let us consider this, and be wise unto salvation, and, in every thought, word, and action, remember our latter end. Let us remember, that “our Redeemer liveth, and that he shall indeed stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after our skin, worms destroy this body, yet in this flesh shall we see God.” And may we so “look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,” by the eye of faith, that when we see him as he is, he may “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself.”

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## DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

*Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.—Eph. iv. 7.*

THE church, having in the course of her holy offices led us through all the different stages of the life of Christ, from his advent in the flesh to his death on the cross, and from thence to his glorious resurrection, and triumphant ascension, has now at length brought us to the celebration of that joyful festival, wherein she proposes to our meditation the blessed fruit and crown of her Redeemer's labours, the effusion of the Spirit from on high. And with good reason it is, that she calls us together more than once to contemplate this greatest of God's mercies, from which alone we derive all our power and ability to contemplate the least of them. For though it was Christ who died, and rose, and ascended, it was the Spirit that proclaimed the news of his having done so to the world; though it was Christ who wrought our salvation, it was the Spirit that communicated the knowledge of it to the sons of men, and makes that knowledge effectual in their hearts. To his descent we owe the publication of the glad tidings, and the conversion of the nations, that were once "afar off, but are now made nigh by the blood of Jesus,\* having access by one Spirit to the Father."† They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth have been struck with an holy fear and reverential awe at the signs and miracles of Jesus, and from thence have been heard songs, even glory to the righteous Redeemer and Judge of the world; since even these isles of the Gentiles sing the praises of Jehovah, and glorify the Lord God of Israel in his church, as it is at this day.

"Every good and perfect gift (saith St. James) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The variableness and the shadow of turning are only in man.

\* Eph. ii. 13.

† Ibid. vi. 18.

The Father of lights, like his glorious representative the sun, shines evermore with the same unvarying brightness and benignity, sending down his good and perfect gifts, as the sun does his light on all. At the beginning, when God had finished his wonderful and glorious works, and pronounced them very good, he made a deed of gift of the whole to his creature man, who might have continued, as he was placed, in the light of his heavenly Father's countenance. But by sin man turned away from God, as the earth does from the sun; and therefore stripped of all the good and perfect gifts of glory and beauty, he sat desolate and disconsolate in the shadow of death.

Sin having thus occasioned a general forfeiture, man has now more reason than ever to acknowledge every good thing he enjoys to be a free *gift* of God, coming down from above. And accordingly, we find, that a right notion of this matter is one of the marks which characterize a believer, and distinguish him from a man of the world. The one speaks of *possessing* as his own, what the other acknowledges to have *received* from God.—“Soul, saith the carnal worldling in the gospel, thou hast goods laid up for many years.”\* “What hast thou, saith St. Paul, that thou didst not receive?”† The language of Esau is, “I have enough.”‡ Jacob speaks in another style; “The good things which God hath given me.”§ Pilate interrogates Christ, “Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?”|| Christ replies to him, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.”¶ The same may be said with regard to the internal goods of the mind, as well as the external advantages of body, or fortune. The heathen, who knows not God, or his gifts, calls his supposed virtue *Εξίς*, a *habit*, an acquisition of his own; the Christian speaks of his real holiness, in no other style than of *δωσις*, or *δωρημα*, a *gift* from God.

And this gift of holiness, or of the Spirit, whose title is the Holy One, was indeed the good and the perfect gift, the joy, the crown, and the glory of all gifts; insomuch, that Christ calls it emphatically, “The gift of God;” saying to the woman of Samaria, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou

\* Luke xii. 19.

§ Gen. vi. 5.

† 1 Cor. iv. 7.

|| John xix. 10.

‡ Gen. xxxiii. 9.

¶ Ibid. vi. 11.

wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”\* St. Peter uses the same form of expression, when he says to Simon Magus, “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money.”† As it came down from the Father of lights, it is more precious than fine gold, and all the things which are the objects of man’s desire upon earth are not to be compared unto it. Wherefore, St. Paul says of it, “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift;”‡ a gift, which no tongue of man could treat of as it deserved; so that a new set of tongues, endued with the force and activity of fire, were sent from heaven, to display and describe to the world the glories of this manifold grace of God.

But we are to consider the *giver* of this unspeakable gift, which is Christ: “the gift of Christ,” says the text. And it could be the gift of no other, because man having, by rebellion, forfeited the original grant, the attainer must be taken off, before the grant could be renewed. Christ only could take off the attainer, and therefore Christ only could renew the grant. And as he did renew the grant, it is plain he has taken off the attainer. He died on the cross to atone for sin; he arose from the grave to show that the penalty was paid to the uttermost farthing, because the surety was released and set free for ever; he ascended to plead the merits of what he had done for his brethren; and he sent down the Spirit upon the church to demonstrate the acceptance of those merits, since he who pleaded them was in full possession of the forfeited riches of grace in the kingdom of heaven.—“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, he gave gifts unto men.”§ When, having overcome the sharpness of death, and vanquished the powers of hell, he went up, a glorious conqueror, in triumph to his throne in heaven; then it was, that he scattered abroad the tokens of his victory, and poured forth the pledges of his munificence on the church, for which he died to purchase them. That same Jesus who was crucified, “being exalted to the right hand of God,” hath shed forth those streams of the water of life, which have been flowing ever since from the throne of God and the Lamb, through the appointed channels, to water every plant and flower in the garden of God.

\* John iv. 10.

† 2 Cor. ix. 15.

‡ Acts viii. 20.

§ Eph. iv. 8.

I say every plant and flower, because "unto every one of us," as the apostle declares, "is given grace." No member of Christ is without the grace of Christ, which is conveyed, with his blood, by the sacraments, and other ordinances to quicken and animate the whole body of the church, as the vital heat is diffused with the natural blood, through the arteries, to support and invigorate all the parts of the body of a man. The Spirit and blood of Christ are as necessary for the life of the church and her members, as the vital heat and natural blood are for the life of the body and its members. When, therefore, all flesh, Gentile as well as Jew, became incorporated into the church, which is the body of Christ, the Lord poured out of his Spirit upon all flesh, and there was no age, sex, condition, or nation, that did not partake of the fountain of life freely, which flowed from the heart of Christ pierced on the cross, and which, when circulated in the church, as the blood is in the body, wherever it came, brought life, and health, and salvation with it to all flesh. In no place was its "way manifested upon earth" by the preaching of the word, and the institution of the ordinances, which were as so many vessels to convey it, but there was manifested, at the same time, "its saving health unto all nations," all being "one body in Christ Jesus, and every one members one of another."

But though grace be given to the whole body, and every member has his share, we must not forget, that every member is to have no more than his share. For as "all members have not the same office," but "there are diversities of administrations," so likewise must there be "diversities of gifts." For the Spirit was given in different *measure* to different persons, and at different times: as to the apostles, for establishing the church, in one measure: to the ordinary ministers, for governing it, in another; and to every individual, for his sanctification, in a third.—"Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

The first measure, which may be styled the *apostolical*, differs from all the rest in the nature of the gifts, as well the end and manner of their being given.

As to their nature, it is written, that "God bore the apostles witness with signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost,"\* who was constantly with them,

\* Heb. ii. 4.



displaying to the world his almighty power by numberless external demonstrations of his presence, as well as manifesting his infinite wisdom by his internal operations and gifts. They had "the word of wisdom," or a supernatural revelation made to them of that wisdom of God in a mystery, the whole scheme of his dispensations in Christ. They had "the word of knowledge," or the gift of understanding the scriptures, which contain and describe this wisdom. They had "faith," to remove all mountains that stood in their way by miracles, and to give them an holy confidence and courage, invincible by all the powers of earth and hell. They had the gift of "healing" all the diseases of soul and body by a single word; the power of working all "miracles," controlling the agency of created nature, raising the dead, and inflicting punishments on the disobedient, as Moses did on Egypt, by the rod of their apostolic power. They had the gift of "prophecy," to explain things past, and foretell things future, to preach and pray at all times by the Spirit, till all things were put in order, and the church service framed and established. They could "discern spirits," and see through all the devices and disguises of Satan, at a glance. Add to all this the gift of "tongues, and their interpretation," by which the same persons were enabled to speak and understand all the languages under heaven, without a moment's labour.

The end for which these extraordinary gifts were given, was the public benefit of the church, then rising out of the nations, and opposed on one side by the envy and malignity of the blind Jew, on the other by the false wisdom and earthly power of the idolatrous Gentile. In these circumstances "the word of knowledge" was necessary to confute the Jew from the scriptures; "the word of wisdom, and the demonstration of the Spirit," to bring to nothing the wisdom, and overthrow the power of the Gentile; and all the gifts of God to cast out and destroy the works of the devil. As the church was to be gathered out of an unbelieving world, there was need of miracles, which, as the apostle says, "are a sign to them that believe not." And this may perhaps intimate to us the time when they ceased, namely, when the spirit of heathenism and opposition was overcome and extinguished by them. These gifts therefore were given "for the work of the ministry, and edification of the body of Christ;" not for the private or inward sanctification of those

that had them, who were not the better men for them, but were to be sanctified in their degree by the ordinary means, as other men were. To prevent men from being puffed up with what is bestowed on them for the benefit of others, it should be recollected, that Saul was among the prophets, and Judas among the apostles. Wherefore Christ tells us, that "many will say to him in the day of Judgment, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wondrous works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."\* And so again, when the apostles, having received and made trial of their gifts, returned to him full of joy, "saying, Lord, the very devils are subject to us through thy name;" his answer was, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."† And the reason is plain; for so far were these miraculous powers from necessarily transforming their minds, and renewing their souls, that they could not, like one single act of genuine repentance and saving faith, give them a title to the kingdom of God. St. Paul, the great converter of the Gentile world, was obliged to use the proper means of mortification and self-denial, to "keep under his body, and bring it into subjection, lest after he had preached to others," in all the demonstration of the power of the omnipotent Spirit, he, this great St. Paul himself, should become a castaway.

The manner in which these apostolical gifts were conferred, shows them to have been extraordinary, and for extraordinary purposes. For whereas the Spirit, in its ordinary work of sanctification, acts upon the souls of men, as his representative, the air, or material spirit, does upon their bodies, by a silent, equable, and imperceptible mode of operation, giving to all things life and motion; his coming at the day of Pentecost was sudden, impetuous, and irresistible; not in the still small voice of the common breathing of the air, but in "the sound of a mighty rushing wind;" and that not blowing, as in the common course of nature, horizontally, but descending directly from above; not spreading itself abroad, and diffusing its agency universally, but "filling that house," and that house only, "where the apostles were sitting." From thence indeed it went forth, by a display of its miraculous gifts, to the ends

\* Matt. vii. 23.

† Luke x. 17. 20.

of the world. But as it had a work to perform, which never was performed but once, so its operations were such as no spirit in after times can pretend to, without proving itself, by the attempt, to be a spirit of error and delusion. Since there is as much difference between the extraordinary effusion of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost for founding the church, and the ordinary gift of grace for the sanctification of believers, as there is between that mighty Spirit, which, at God's command, moved at the beginning upon the face of the deep, to form the earth, and the common air acting continually for its support and preservation.

The second measure of grace is the *ecclesiastical* measure, or that which is given to the ordinary ministry, for the standing government and continual edification of the church. This likewise is the gift of Christ, he being the fountain head of all principality and power; and it is conferred by the Spirit, who only commissions men to be the representatives of Christ, and to act in his name. Thus it is written in the Acts of the apostles;—"The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul."\* This ecclesiastical measure is as distinct from the common measure of sanctification, as the apostolical, which will be seen by considering (as in the former case) its nature, the end for which, and manner in which it is given.

As to its nature, it is a *commission*, or an *office*, concerning which it is a rule established beyond all controversy, that "no man taketh it unto himself." Internal gifts and graces may qualify a person for an office, but they cannot put him into one. No man, however righteous and holy through faith and the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, can have authority to act in the name of Christ, till Christ gives him that authority. Before that is done, let his life and character be what they will, his ministrations can have no validity. Whatever he may be in other respects, in this particular he is a grievous offender, and will be found guilty before God of sacrilegiously intruding into an office, to which he can have no pretensions. A crime, for which the leprosy once rose up in the forehead of a monarch,† and Korah and all

\* Acts xiii. 2.

\* "When Uzziah was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord, to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And

his company (holy as they said they all were) went down alive into the pit. And that none in the Christian church might imitate the presumption of Uzziah, or "go in the gainsaying of Korah," even Christ "took not this honour upon himself, nor glorified himself to be made an high priest (for a glory it was to him), till he was called of God," by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon him in the presence of the people, and by the voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. From that time Jesus began to preach." Who then is that follower of Jesus, that shall offer to begin before?

The end for which this ecclesiastical measure of the gift of Christ was bestowed on the church, confirms the distinction between that and the common measure of sanctifying grace. The end of the apostolical gifts was the founding and establishing the church; the end of the ecclesiastical is the preserving and edifying it, by the exercise of discipline, the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments. Persons are separated from a common condition to holy offices, that, by their ministration, souls may be separated from the pollutions of sin to holiness of life. So that holiness of office is as distinct from holiness of life, as the cause from the effect; one is given to the ministry, that the other may be produced in the people. And though all that are in holy offices ought to lead holy lives, and it should be a part of our daily prayers to God that he would enable them to do so, yet a failure in duty is not a forfeiture of authority. The vices of a minister make not void the acts of his ministry; dominion, in this case, as in all others, not being founded on grace, but on a positive commission

Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men. And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but unto the priests, the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God. Then Uzziah was wrath, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wrath with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead, before the priests, in the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked upon him, and behold he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence, yea himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper, for he was cut off from the house of the Lord."—2 Chron. xxvi. 16, &c.



given by him who is empowered to give it, and continuing in force till he takes it away. It is with an officer of the church as with an officer of the state: a misdemeanour does not vacate his office, or entitle another to step into it. The king, or an agent appointed by him, must take it from one, and give it to another. If this necessary distinction between holiness of *office* and holiness of *person* be not kept up, the end for which a ministry was appointed will not be attained; all will be teachers, and no hearers; all governors, and no subjects: the church, as a society, will be dissolved, and a confusion introduced into the spiritual system, like that which prevailed in the natural, when "the earth was without form, and void, and darkness lay upon the face of the deep."

The manner of the conveyance of this ecclesiastical measure of grace has likewise been always distinctive of it. Under the law, the priesthood was conveyed by *unction*. And to show how far removed it was from every thing common or ordinary, it is written concerning the holy anointing oil used upon the occasion, "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it; it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people."\* When Christ, after his resurrection, appointed his apostles to the work of the ministry, "he *breathed* on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost."† The next words show for what purpose the Spirit was then given by his breathing on them;—"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." The apostles afterward ordained by the "laying on of hands," as their successors have done, and do to this day, saying, after the example and by the authority of their great Lord and Master;—"Receive thou the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins thou dost remit, they are remitted; and whose soever sins thou dost retain, they are retained."‡

The third measure of the gift of Christ is that given for the personal *sanctification* of individuals. Now, in order to form a clear idea of sanctification, it must be considered, that man, as a fallen creature, stands in need of two things, a deliverance from the guilt of sins past, and an emancipation

\* Exod. xxx. 32.

† John xx. 22.

‡ Church of England Ordination Office.

from the power of sin present and future. The former of these is styled *justification*, the latter *sanctification*. The one is performed without a man, by the blood of Christ, effectually offered and pleaded for him in the presence of God, upon his repentance and faith; the other is wrought within him, by the Spirit sent into his soul, in consequence, as well as evidence of its justification. Christ first made the atonement for sin by shedding his blood, then ascended to plead it, and then sent the Spirit. The atonement he made once; but he liveth continually to make intercession for us, by pleading it in our behalf; and as continually to send the Spirit to renew the soul of every sinner, who, by repentance and faith, through the ministration of the church, lays hold on the benefits of that prevailing intercession, and is "accepted in the beloved." Justification, whensoever granted, must be perfect, because forgiveness cannot be partial; sanctification may be imperfect, and always is so till death, because till then, "in many things we offend all," and still stand in need of fresh justification and forgiveness: else why pray we for it, to our last breath, in the words which Christ himself has taught us, saying, "Forgive us our trespasses?" And why said the holy and experienced Augustine, "that the best posture in which death can find the most perfect Christian, is upon his knees, confessing his sins, and entreating forgiveness?"

The first portion of sanctifying grace is given at baptism, which is the seal of justification, and the beginning of sanctification; inasmuch as the sinner being then sacramentally buried with Christ into his death, arises with him in the power of his resurrection, justified from the guilt of sin through repentance and faith in his blood, and renewed unto holiness by the operation of his Spirit. This total renewal, as first conferred by the baptismal laver, is styled *regeneration*, and answers, in things natural, to the birth of an infant. But then, as an infant, though born complete in all its parts, yet comes to its full stature and strength by slow and imperceptible degrees; by being supplied with proper kinds of food for its nourishment when in health, and proper medicines for its recovery when otherwise; so is it with the regenerate spirit of a Christian, while it is (as St. Peter calls it) a babe in Christ, it must be fed with the milk of the word; when it is more grown in grace, with

the strong meat of its salutary doctrines; when it is infirm, it must be strengthened by the comforts of its promises; and when sick, or wounded by sin, it must be recovered and restored by godly counsel and wholesome discipline, by penance and absolution, by the medicines of the word and sacraments, as duly and properly administered in the church, by the lawfully and regularly appointed delegates and representatives of the physician of souls. This gradual and complex work of our sanctification is carried on through our whole lives, by the Spirit of God given, in due degree and proportion, to every individual, for that purpose. And it is marvellous to behold (as the excellent Bishop Andrews observes) how, from the laver of regeneration to the administration of the *Viaticum*, this good Spirit helpeth us, and poureth his benefits upon us, having a grace for every season. When we are troubled with erroneous opinions, he is the Spirit of truth; when assaulted with temptations, he is the Spirit of holiness; when dissipated with worldly vanity, he is the Spirit of compunction; when broken with worldly sorrow, he is the Holy Ghost the Comforter. It is he who, after having regenerated us in our baptism, confirms us by the imposition of hands; renews us to repentance, when we fall away; teaches us, all our life long, what we know not; puts us in mind of what we forget; stirs us up when we are dull; helps us in our prayers; relieves us in our infirmities; consoles us in our heaviness; gives songs of joy in the darkest night of sorrow; seals us to the day of our redemption; and raises us up again in the last day, when that which was sown in grace shall be reaped in glory; and the work of sanctification in spirit, soul, and body, shall be completed. What Christian, that considers this unspeakable gift of God, but must say of him, with the Psalmist, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our God?"\* Seeing every Christian may now so properly take up those other words of the same sweet Psalmist;—"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."†

What therefore remains, but that we show forth the thankfulness of our hearts by the holiness of our lives, and live as becometh those, whom Christ, having redeemed by his most precious blood, hath sanctified with his most Holy

\* Ps. xl. 3.

† Ibid. xxiii. ult.

Spirit. Seeing Christ our Saviour has bestowed such a gift upon his church, let us never provoke him to take it from us. As it is a gift, let us always be forward to acknowledge as much; not attributing to nature what is due to grace, or robbing the Holy Ghost to adorn reason. As, though a gift, it is given to every man to profit withal, let us have that day continually in our thoughts, when an account of our profiting will be required; and let us never forget, that the same fire burns for the *unprofitable* and *unbeliever*; for him who neglects this gracious gift, and for him who rejects it. Since by the ascension of Christ the heavens have been opened, and the Holy Dove has been sent down upon the earth, let us not give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eyelids, till we have prepared in our hearts an habitation for him. Let pride depart, that it drive not away the spirit of humility; let anger be put from us, that we quench not the spirit of meekness; and let not that which is unchaste be named, or thought of, that we grieve not the spirit of purity. So shall we be meet entertainers of this heavenly guest, and "to every one of us will be given the gift of Christ."

But as there are different measures of this gift, let every one take care that he think not more highly of himself, or arrogate more to himself, than he ought; but let him know himself, his station, and his abilities; and think and act soberly, according as God has dealt the measure to him. The God who sent the Spirit is a God of order, and from the beginning "has appointed divers orders in the church," and set different officers in different posts. Let every man therefore, in his own order, do the work allotted him. Let not the layman take upon him the office of a deacon; nor the deacon intrude into the function of the priest; nor the priest usurp the authority of the bishop; much less fancy himself invested with the oecumenical commission of an apostle. Good men have had occasion to lament the calamities that have been brought upon the church, from age to age, through a neglect of this important consideration; a consideration, on which is suspended the felicity of every society, in heaven and earth. When the soul of the learned, the pious, the incomparable author of the *Ecclesiastical Polity* was about to take her flight to the regions of everlasting harmony and love, a friend asked him, what might



then be the subject of his contemplations? He replied, that “he was meditating the number and nature of angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven—and O that it might be so on earth!” With our endeavours let us add our prayers to his, that our eyes may behold Jerusalem, “a city at unity in itself;” a city, on this account, equally conspicuous for beauty and strength; to its friends appearing “fair as the moon;” to its spiritual adversaries, “terrible as an army with banners.”

## DISCOURSE XIX.

THE PREVAILING INTERCESSOR.

*And Aaron took, as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and behold the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people; and he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed.—Numb. xvi. 47, 48.*

It may be questioned, whether any history in the world ever afforded a finer subject for a picture, than this before us. Aaron, in his sacerdotal vestments, the smoke of the incense ascending from the holy censer in his hand, might be drawn, standing up amidst crowds of Israelites, smitten with the pestilence. The wrath of God might be represented, rolling forth in fiery waves from the tabernacle, and almost reaching the high priest; but recoiling, as checked in its progress by his powerful intercession. On one side of the intercessor might be portrayed the most ghastly horrors in the countenances of the dead; on the other side might be discovered the reviving gleams of hope and joy in the faces of the living, on perceiving that the plague was stayed.

But in order to enter thoroughly into all the parts of this supposed picture, it will be necessary to take a view of the whole history to which it relates; that we may learn the crime of the sufferers, which brought on their punishment, and the nature of that intercession which put a stop to it.

Moses and Aaron were appointed by God the governors and conductors of his people. But though they ruled with the utmost wisdom and integrity, it happened, that *they* could not please every body. Korah, a discontented factious Levite, charged Aaron with priestcraft:—"All the congregation, he said, were holy, and the Lord was among them;" every man was qualified to be his own priest, to instruct, and to save himself; and who was Aaron, that he should set himself up above his brethren, and lord it over God's heritage? At the same time that a schism was thus forming in the church, a rebellion was likewise fomented in the state. For Dathan and Abiram, who were laymen, and princes of the congregation, accused Moses of tyranny, and a design to establish arbitrary power; which they affirmed to be so clear a case, that unless he "put out the eyes" of the people, they must see he intended to enslave, and to make "himself altogether a prince over them." Matters soon came to an open rupture; God himself was appealed to, and a day fixed to determine the cause. And a most tremendous determination indeed it was. For when the two parties had, according to order, separated from each other, and all with eager expectation stood waiting the event, behold "the ground," which was under the rebels, suddenly "clave asunder, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up and their houses, and all that appertained to them; they went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation. And there came out a fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense." They who have not studied human nature, who have not seen or heard much of mankind, will perhaps imagine, that such a decision as this must needs have silenced every objection, and put an end to the murmurings of discontent. And so far indeed it is true, that "the people fled at the cry of those who suffered, for they said, lest the earth swallow us up also." But as soon as the danger was over, they discovered the real sentiments of their corrupted hearts. After a single night's rest, the spirit of rebellion again took possession of them; and, all reverence laid aside, they go in a tumultuous and insolent manner to their leaders, requiring at their hands, truly, the blood of Korah and his followers.—"On the morrow, all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and

against Aaron, saying, ye have slain the people of the Lord." Thus, by standing up for these offenders, they showed a secret approbation of their offence; and being partakers of their crime, they justly also became partakers of their punishment. The divine wrath therefore went out against them.—"Get you up, said the Lord to Moses and Aaron, from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." A most dreadful pestilence ensued; and then it was, that Aaron did, as is recorded of him in the text; "he took a censer, with fire from off the altar, and put on incense, as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and made an atonement for the people." He exposed himself, for their sake, to the vengeance of heaven, which was rolling on, like an irresistible torrent, and had already swept away near fifteen thousand of his brethren; he stood in the midway between the wrath and them, "between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed." It stopped where Aaron stood; before him all were consumed; all behind him were saved. An action this so full of faith and love, as to deserve the admiration of all ages; so wonderfully blessed in its consequences, that it cannot but well repay the time and pains we shall employ in inquiring into the grounds and reasons of them, and learning how it should come to pass, that the intercession of Aaron should arrest the wrath of God in its impetuous course, and save from impending death the remnant of rebellious Israel. And in the prosecution of the subject it may perhaps appear, that this awful and affecting scene, which we have been contemplating, as affording fine matter for a picture, is itself a picture only of another more august and interesting scene, in which all the children of Adam are concerned, and do bear their parts.

Let us then ask—Was it for Aaron's sake that God spared the remnant of his people? Had Aaron any merit of his own, any superfluous righteousness, which might be imputed to them? Far from it; since however comparatively holy and faithful he might be, yet was he a descendant of that Adam, of whose children it is testified, that "there is none that doeth good; no not one." He, and "every high priest taken from among men," were necessarily heirs of the universal corruption; they had their infirmities, as the apostle

argues, and were obliged to offer up sacrifices for their *own* sins, as well as for those of the people. Aaron, therefore, of himself, could make no atonement for them; and without an atonement, the justice of God could not let them escape. To account for this wonderful deliverance, we must carry on our thoughts farther; we must look to some higher atonement, some greater and more powerful Intercessor and High Priest, in whose name Aaron might act, and, in virtue of whose merits, he might, as a representative, prevail with God to be gracious to his people.

And here, there is but one person, upon whom all our thoughts must immediately be fixed, namely, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of our profession, the effectual Intercessor for the salvation of sinners. Had we any doubt, whether Aaron, when officiating according to the law, represented *Him*, St. Paul, in the epistle to the Hebrews, has determined the point, beyond all contradiction. He tells us, that the law had a shadow of good things to come, of which Christ and his heavenly truths were the body and substance; that Aaron and all other high priests were the representatives of him who is our gracious Intercessor and High Priest for ever; that the holy of holies in the temple was the figure of heaven itself; that all which Aaron did there, foreshowed what our Lord did and does for us above; that the blood there offered by Aaron and his successors, under the law, pointed out the blood of Christ, by him offered to the Father in heaven; and the incense, which was fumed upon those occasions, to spread abroad a grateful smell, denoted the merits of our blessed Redeemer, which appease the wrath of God, render all our prayers and oblations acceptable, and fill heaven and earth with the sweet smelling savour of life, peace, and salvation.

These things being understood and considered, we may easily collect, from what has been said, the reason why Aaron's intercession, on the behalf of offending Israel, was so powerful and effectual. For if Aaron, in the office of high priest and mediator, represented the world's Redeemer; and if the atonement, which he made for Israel, showed forth that great atonement to be one day made by Jesus Christ for the church universal of all ages and nations; then God had undoubtedly respect unto that great atonement, and



for his sake who was to make it, pardoned those for whom it was to be made. In the person of Aaron he beheld his beloved son, in whom he is well pleased, interceding for the transgressors; Israel was spared for the sake of Aaron, but Aaron himself was accepted for the sake of Christ.

And now, I would willingly hope, that this scene begins to open upon you in all its glory. For surely the brightest imagination cannot figure to itself a more exact and lively representation of our sinfulness, of the divine wrath, and the mercies of redemption. Under this most affecting image of rebellious Israel, smitten with a pestilence, and saved by the intercession of Aaron, are described to us the miserable and lost state of man after the fall, the terrible execution of God's justice on the one hand, and the gracious interposition of our Redeemer on the other, with the effects of both.

Were the men of Israel sinners and rebels against their God? So we are all. All have sinned; all have broken their allegiance to their Creator and Sovereign, and come over to his and their enemy. When we read of the repeated transgressions of Israel, with the mercies and the judgments of heaven fresh in their memories, nay, even before their eyes, we are amazed and confounded, and almost tempted to disbelieve the accounts of such horrible perverseness and ingratitude. But conscience sleepeth all this while, and we stand in need of a Nathan, to tell each of us, "Thou art the man." For who amongst us has not experienced the mercies of God; and who has not abused them? Who has not trembled at his judgments; and who has not forgotten them again? Who, in the hour of sickness and sorrow, has not made vows and resolutions of amendment; and who, in the day of health and gladness, has not broken those vows and resolutions? Alas, my brethren, our own hearts, if we do but consult them, must tell us, that the history of Israel is true, and that we all have in us, derived from our common father Adam, a portion of the same rebellious spirit which was in them.—"Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for, as saith an apostle, we have charged both Jews and Gentiles," that is, all the world, "that they are all under sin;" as it is written in the scriptures of truth,—"There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh

after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known; there is no fear of God before their eyes—All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Such is the scripture account of fallen man; such are the works of which the world hath been full from the beginning, and is likely to continue so unto the end. Mankind, therefore, resemble the people of Israel in their sins. Let us next examine, whether they do not likewise resemble them in their punishment.

Did Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with all their company, go down into the pit? Did a fire come forth from the Lord, and consume the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense? And did a raging pestilence sweep off the murmurers by thousands? What are we taught by all this, but the same concerning lesson, which the apostle teaches us in words, that “the wages of sin is death,” and that “death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Forfeiture of life and inheritance necessarily followed the transgression. In Adam all died; all became mortal in their bodies, and subjected to the sentence of natural death. And not only so, but the souls of men were deprived by sin of communication with God, who is the fountain of spiritual life; and both soul and body were in danger of eternal death. When, therefore, we behold the camp of Israel in the wilderness visited by the divine judgments; when we see some going down alive into the dreadful pit; others scorched up in a moment by fire from heaven; and a pestilence threatening to consume the rest; when we look around, and view, in every part of the picture, the dying and the dead; do we not at once acknowledge the original from which it is drawn, and discern in it the too, too faithful portrait of a fallen world, full of misery and death, because full of sin and rebellion!

But what? Must we then indeed perish? Must we all perish? “Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever!

Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Is the plague begun among the people, and is there no person who can stay it? O, not so, blessed be our gracious God; there is yet hope of comfort, health, and salvation. Turn your eyes once more to the instructive picture, and there view the Intercessor making atonement, and saving the remnant of his people. Destruction was not the end for which God formed man.—“For God made not death. He created man to be immortal, and made him an image of his own eternity. Through envy of the devil came death into the world; and still, as at the first, they alone who hold of his side, do find it.” The covenant of works being broken by transgression, the covenant of grace immediately succeeded in its room. This was the remedy provided against sin and death, and the blessed means of reconciliation fore-ordained by the Divine Persons, before the foundation of the world; that the sinner, who had no righteousness of his own to plead in arrest of judgment, might, upon the new terms of this act of grace, again find acceptance and life, through the divine satisfaction and intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. *He* was consecrated to be our High Priest, and ordained to perform an office, in attempting which, every high priest taken from among men must else have failed. He had no need to offer sacrifice for his own sins, since he had none; but being himself all righteous, was perfectly qualified to save others. Nor was his priesthood to pass from one to another, or to have an end, like that of Aaron, but it was eternal and unchangeable, as the Son of God who exercised it. Such was our High Priest, who perceived that, on account of man's transgression, wrath was gone forth from the presence of the Lord, and that the plague was begun among the people. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor. Therefore he arrayed himself in the holy garments of glory and beauty; he put on a breastplate of righteousness, and a robe of inviolable sanctity, and he was clad, over all, with zeal as a cloak. He was anointed with the oil of gladness, with the Holy Ghost, and with power; and on his head was a crown of salvation and glory. Thus adorned and fitted for the work, he put on, for incense, the merits of his sufferings. He ran into the midst of God's people,

as a mediator, interposing himself between the parties at variance, in order to reconcile them. He met the burning wrath, and turned it aside from all believers. He stood, and stands now, between the dead and the living, between those who, by opposing his method of salvation, will die in their sins, and those who, living and believing in him, shall never die eternally. He is at the right hand of God, ever making intercession for us. And so, the plague is stayed. A stop is put to the progress of everlasting destruction.—The fiery sword of offended justice cannot reach, nor shall the second death have any power over such as accept the atonement which he hath made for them, and thankfully receive the benefits of his all-prevailing intercession. “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

And can any thing then, my brethren, prevent our accepting this atonement, and thankfully receiving the benefits of this intercession? Can any thing induce us, when the bountiful hand of mercy hath filled, and holdeth out the cup of salvation, to dash it untasted from us? Nothing can, but an utter ignorance of our sin, and of our danger. Could a dying Israelite have been prevailed upon, think you, to reject the atonement and intercession of Aaron? No, surely. Only see how hope revives in their countenances, and joy sparkles in their eyes, all turned and fixed upon him in the execution of his priestly office. And why? Because they were sensible of their wretched and perilous estate. They needed not to be told, that they were expiring by the pestilence. They knew it, they felt it; they were looking wishfully around them for help and deliverance, ready, with eagerness and impatience, with gratitude and thankfulness, to snatch at it, and embrace it, the moment it should appear. O, why are not we so? Why do we hear of the atonement and intercession of the Holy Jesus, with so much cold indifference? Why, but because we see not, we know not, we feel not the want of them. And yet, what is there, within us, or without us, that doth not teach and show it us? To tell you that the world is full of sorrow, is no news; to tell you that the world is full of sin, is, I presume, no news. And from what would you desire to be delivered, if not from sin and sorrow? To tell you that a sentence of death is passed upon the bodies of men, and that, without redemption, a sentence of condemnation will be passed upon their souls



and bodies too, this likewise is no news to any one of you. Daily experience proves the first, and the scripture asserts the second. And from what would you wish to be saved, if not from death and condemnation? Or what, in point of wretchedness and horror, was the camp of Israel with the pestilence in the midst of it, if compared to such a world as this? Go, thou who art tempted to reject, or to neglect the satisfaction of Christ, go to the bed of sickness, and undraw the curtains of affliction; ask him who lies racked with pain, and trembling at the thoughts of the wrath to come, what his opinion is concerning the doctrine of atonement; and observe how the name of a Saviour and Intercessor puts comfort and gladness into his sorrowful and affrighted soul, at a time when the treasures and the crowns of eastern kings would be utterly contemned, as equally vain, worthless, and unprofitable, with the dust of the earth. Then reflect, that such, one day, must be thy state; and, in that state, such infallibly will be thy thoughts and sensations. And did the cares and pleasures of the world suffer living men to think and feel as dying men do, the intercession of Christ would be regarded, and accepted by Christians, as that of Aaron once was by Israel. Now, indeed, the sentiments of men on this great point may be different, because their passions and their prejudices are different; but we shall all think alike upon the subject, when passion shall cease, and prejudice be no more, at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment. In that last and concerning day, the scene on which we have been meditating shall be again exhibited, in its most awful and tremendous accomplishment. Instead of the earthly pit opening its mouth to swallow up Korah and his company, the infernal pit of everlasting destruction shall disclose its bottomless depth, to receive alive into it the great adversary, and all that have taken part with him against God and Christ. Instead of fire from the presence of the Lord, to consume the two hundred and fifty that offered incense, "Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, and leave them neither root nor branch." Instead of the pestilence to destroy fourteen thousand only of his murmuring people, the inexhaustible floods of almighty vengeance, heaped up for ages, shall be poured out, to drown rebellious spirits in

irresistible perdition. Then, when the heavens shall melt with fervent heat all around, the fiery gulph rolling beneath, and the earth, upon which we stand, sinking down into the flames, then what a sight will it be, to behold our blessed Aaron, our great Mediator, standing up, and interposing his merits between the dead and the living; between those who, disbelieving, have murmured against him, and those who, believing, have served and obeyed him. Then tremble, thou wretch, who hast blasphemed, or slighted the intercession of Jesus. But rejoice greatly, O faithful soul, whose trust hath ever been in Him; thy salvation is sure, and the day of thy redemption is come: rejoice, and shout aloud for joy; join the chorus of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, whom the well-beloved John heard saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And with them let "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," exalt their voices, and proclaim, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." Amen.\*

\* The plan and substance of the foregoing discourse are taken from one published some years ago, by my late learned and valuable friend, the Reverend Mr. Watson. But it always seemed to me, as I frequently used to tell him, that he had much abated the force and energy which the composition would otherwise have possessed, by introducing a secondary and subordinate subject, which continually diverted the attention of his reader from the primary and principal one. I was therefore tempted to work up his admirable materials afresh, with some few alterations and additions, that so noble a subject as the Intercession of Christ, illustrated by that of Aaron, might stand out to observation, *simplex dumtaxat et unum*.

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## DISCOURSE XX.

DANIEL IN BABYLON.

*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house ; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.—Dan. vi. 10.*

THE chapter relates to us a conspiracy formed by the Babylonian princes against Daniel, because the king, “finding an excellent spirit in him,” had preferred him above them all. For we read of no crime but his merit, which, indeed, is a crime sufficiently heinous in the eyes of those who are destitute of it. At all events therefore Daniel must be impeached. The only question was, in what form it should be done.—“Concerning the kingdom,” and his fidelity to his sovereign, “they could find (and we may be sure it was not for want of diligence in searching) none occasion or fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.” And now, what do they pitch upon as an article of impeachment against him? Why, truly, his PIETY.—“We shall not find (say these statesmen) any occasion against this Daniel, unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” But some difficulty there still remained in the carrying this project into execution; as, it seems, there was no law yet in being, even in Babylon itself, that inflicted a penalty upon a man for being eminently devout. The great men therefore assembling together, went in a body to the king, and prevailed upon him to sign a decree, which flattered his pride, that “whosoever should ask a petition of any god, or man, for thirty days, save of him, should be cast into the den of lions.” Thus was atheism established by law in the court, city, and empire of Babylon, for the space of one month; and now, let any one *pray*, who dared. But the contrivers of this new law were well enough acquainted with Daniel’s character, to know, that fear of the lions would never cause him to

give over his devotions for one day, much less for thirty. And so accordingly it turned out. For "when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Never, surely, did the spirit and power of devotion shine forth with greater lustre, than at this time, in the person of Daniel, upon his knees, in such circumstances. Let us therefore meditate for a while on an object, which, as we are assured by the sequel, engaged the attention of Heaven itself.

If we consider the situation of Daniel in Babylon, it will teach us that nothing ever ought to make us omit our daily devotions. And if we consider the manner of his praying, it will teach us how we ought to perform them.

With regard to Daniel's situation in Babylon, we may contemplate him as one in captivity in a strange and heathen land; as one encumbered with the concerns of a vast empire; and as one in danger of his life for what he did.

It had been no wonder to have seen Daniel devout in Jerusalem. For there was the temple of God, the true church and worship, frequented by all his countrymen. There dwelt the Holy One of Israel, and the light of his countenance visited, and shone continually upon them. But when Jerusalem was trodden down of the Gentiles, and the temple laid low in the dust; when the Lord had "covered the daughter of Sion with a cloud in the day of his anger;" when "the glory was departed from Israel," and Daniel, with the rest of those that escaped the slaughter, had been led away into captivity, among infidels and scoffers; that the holy fire of devotion should burn and shine through all these disadvantages and temptations,—this was indeed a sight, which God himself delighted to behold; as such devotion could spring from nothing else, but that love of him in the heart, mentioned by king Solomon, which "many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it;" all the sorrows and afflictions in the world cannot extinguish it; but it will break through, and triumph gloriously, as we find it did, in the case before us. In Babylon, as well as Jerusalem, "Daniel prayed three times a day." And there are two circumstances mentioned, which seem to have contributed toward keeping his faith and devotion alive and vigorous in



those worst of times, namely, meditation in the scriptures, and a severe temperance. For in his 9th chapter he tells us, that "he understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." And in the first chapter we have an account of his refusing the luxuries of the regal table, and choosing to live upon diet of the plainest kind. Through patience and comfort of the scriptures, therefore, he had hope, and lived in expectation of seeing the divine promises accomplished, in the restoration of Israel to their own land, and the rebuilding the temple, which he continually prayed for: while, by a strict and holy abstinence, he kept his heart from being ensnared by the good things of Babylon, and suffered not his body to gain the ascendant over his soul. O great and glorious example to every Israelite in Babylon, that is, to every *Christian* in the *world*! Let *him* likewise understand, by the divine books, the writings of the prophets and apostles, that the time approaches, when the church universal shall be delivered from her captivity, and the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God; and therefore, as a stranger and pilgrim here upon earth, let him abstain from fleshly lusts, and not be brought under the power of sense; praying always, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God. This if he shall neglect to do, let him know assuredly, that Daniel will rise up in the judgment against him, and condemn him. And much more so, if living in a Christian country, where the true church and worship are established, he shall omit to do that which Daniel never omitted to do, among his heathen enemies.

But perhaps we have too much business upon our hands, to spare time for our devotions. Time is very precious with most people, when they are to perform their devotions; and if they have not enough for every body, they generally make free, in the first place, with their Creator. But let these men of business consider the case of Daniel. Have they more business than he had, who was the first of the three presidents appointed to receive and audit all the accounts of an hundred and twenty princes, set over the vast empire of Persia, of which, at that time, almost all the kingdoms of the earth were provinces? It would puzzle one to conceive a man in a situation that would afford him less leisure. Yet all this

business did Daniel discharge faithfully and punctually, and found time to pray, and give thanks before his God, thrice every day constantly. The same we may observe of king David, who, though frequently engaged in war, and always in the management of a kingdom, yet made and kept the very same resolution as to his devotions.—“At evening, and at morning, and at noon day (says he), will I pray, and thou shalt hear instantly, and he shall hear my voice.” Nay, this did not content him in the matter of thanksgiving; for, “seven times a day (says he elsewhere) do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.” And it was he who, amidst all the cares of state, composed and sung to the harp those divine hymns, which have been the delight of the faithful from that day to this, and shall be so to the end of the world. To these examples from the sacred history we may add that of a prince of our own, the great and good king Alfred, whose wisdom and diligence restored this kingdom from a state of the greatest confusion to one of the most perfect order, and preserved it in the same all the while he was upon the throne. Yet no less than eight hours, out of the four and twenty, did this monarch, so engaged, allot to reading, meditation, and prayer. Now all these are matters of fact, and show us what may be done by persons, who will set to work in good earnest, and make a prudent disposition of their time. For in one of these two respects it is most certain that man must be deficient, who pretends that he cannot find time to serve God; since Daniel, when prime minister in the court of Persia, “prayed and gave thanks before his God, three times a day.”

And this he continued to do, even when the law was passed, which made it certain death.—“When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went to his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” He did his duty exactly according to his usual custom, as if nothing had happened, and no law had been passed, or any thing said at court about it. He would not go to any other place where his enemies might not have found him, but went to his own house, whither he might suppose they would follow him. He would not secret himself in any private or remote corner of the house, but repaired forthwith to his own

chamber, the place whereunto he always resorted. He thought it not enough to pray inwardly with his mind, which he might have done in any posture, without being perceived, but made his body bear its accustomed part in the service; “he kneeled upon his knees.” He contented not himself with praying once or twice only, dropping the third time in the middle of the day, on account of the imminent danger he was in, but made up his full and usual complement; — “He kneeled upon his knees three times a day.” Nor did he *pray* only, and not *give thanks*, cutting off some part of the service, to make the time of danger shorter, but performed the whole, without curtailing or diminishing aught; — “He prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” And, in short, he would not so much as shut his windows, but did all this, “His windows in his chamber being open toward Jerusalem.” In order to show the meaning of this last circumstance, we must have recourse to a noble passage in king Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple, which Daniel had in his eye, and by which he directed his conduct.—“If thy people sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not), and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives to the land of the enemy, far or near: yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them away captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies which led them away captive, and *pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name*; then hear thou their prayer and supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them that carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them.”—1 Kings viii. 46, &c. The circumstance, therefore, of “praying toward Jerusalem” being thus enjoined, Daniel would by no means omit it. And now, let us consider with ourselves, how clear the conscience, how holy the

soul, how steadfast the faith, how lively the hope, how fervent the charity, how invincible the courage of Daniel must have been, who, in such circumstances, could calmly and composedly go on in the regular and exact performance of his stated devotions. Let us consider of how great consequence the due performance of them is, if, with death in its most horrible form before his eyes, he thought he could not justify a single omission of them. And whenever we are tempted to neglect our prayers, let us remember that Daniel, though the den of lions was to be the consequence, “kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

We have now taken a view of the situation of Daniel in Babylon. We have considered him as one in captivity in a strange and heathen land; as one encumbered with the concerns of a vast empire; and as one in danger of his life for what he did; and hence we have been convinced, it is to be hoped, that nothing ought to make us omit our daily devotions.

From the same great example we may learn how we ought to perform them, with regard to place, posture, time, and matter.

As to place, Daniel, we find, “went to his house, and shut himself up in his chamber.” And our blessed Lord has enjoined us all to do the same.—“Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and shut the door.” And the reason is plain. He who would pray, must first retire. The spirit of the world and the spirit of prayer are contrary the one to the other, and experience will teach any one, that he cannot well pray in a crowd. Business, or pleasure, or even common conversation, if it be about the things of this world, and continued for any time, will strangely indispose the mind for devotion. And the soul, before she can take her flight to heaven, must plume and balance her wings by holy meditation. She must rally her scattered and dissipated thoughts, and fix them on the business she is going about. She must consider the nature of God, to whom she is to pray; of herself who is to pray to him; and of those things for which she is to pray to him. She must know the sins she has been guilty of, to confess them; and the graces she stands in need of, to petition for them. All this is not to be done but by deep meditation; and meditation, which



is the mother of devotion, is the daughter of retirement. They who do not meditate, cannot pray; and they who do not retire, can do neither. God help, and have mercy upon all those who are in this most wretched and deplorable state; as all must be, who pass their days in a senseless round of vain amusements and diversions, in a continual hurry and dissipation of thought, ignorant of the benefits and comforts of the closet, and therefore ignorant of the true state of their minds; ignorant of their Saviour, ignorant of their duty, ignorant of every thing they were sent into the world to know. Thus they live, and—thus they die! If, therefore, we conceive a dread of such a life, and such a death (and too great a dread we cannot conceive), let us learn with holy Daniel to commune with our own heart, and with God, in our chamber. And then let us judge ourselves to have made some progress in the divine life, when the pleasures we find there are preferred (as every experienced Christian knows they ought to be preferred) to all the pleasures the world can offer.

Next to the place, we are to consider the posture in which Daniel prayed. He “kneeled upon his knees, with his face toward Jerusalem.” The Christian warrior differs from all others in this particular, that he is never so sure of conquest, as when he enters into the battle in this attitude. The adversary had rather find him in any situation than this, which is indeed his best posture of defence against all temptations whatsoever. Daniel was so entirely secure in it, that he valued not the roaring of all the lions in the den of Babylon, just opening their mouths to devour him. Nor need the devout soul regard a whit more the rage and fury of that “roaring lion,” spoken of by the apostle, who “goeth about continually up and down in the earth, seeking whom he may devour.” I say, the devout soul need not regard it; for we must not forget, that the posture of the body can profit nothing, unless it be accompanied with that disposition of mind, which it is designed to represent. We are found hypocrites, if we are not inwardly what we appear outwardly to be, when we fall upon our knees. For the intention of so doing is to testify an awful sense of the power and glory of God, and as deep an one of our own infirmity and unworthiness, under which we sink down to the earth from whence we were taken, and acknowledge ourselves to

be but sinful dust and ashes. By this act, when rightly performed, the mind going along with it, we obey the divine command,—“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;” where the apostle addresses us as criminals, under the hand of justice, uplifted to strike the fatal stroke, which there is no way of avoiding, but by falling to the earth. In a word, the duty of prayer is founded upon the sufficiency of God, as an almighty Creator and Redeemer, and our wants, as sinful creatures; both which great truths we confess at once, by meekly kneeling upon our knees; and therefore this is the proper posture for prayer. But what shall we say of Daniel, “setting his face toward Jerusalem,” when he prayed? Are we to imitate him in that likewise? Undoubtedly. Not according to the letter, but the spirit. The Old Jerusalem and temple are destroyed, to be rebuilt no more; in the room of which, a New Jerusalem and a new temple have long since arisen. The New Jerusalem is the Christian church, and the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple. To Christ we must turn our eyes; in the union and communion of his church we must offer up our prayers. Daniel praying in Babylon looked toward Jerusalem; the Christian praying in the world should look toward heaven—toward that new, spiritual, and celestial city of the living God, whose foundations are upon the holy and everlasting hills, and which cannot be removed, but standeth fast for ever. Thither let him look, thither let him pray, in this land of his captivity.

But when, and how often is he to pray? With regard to this point also, Daniel will instruct him, who “kneeled upon his knees three times a day;” that is to say, in the words of holy David before cited,—“At morning, and at evening, and at noon day.” What man is he, that can help offering up his morning sacrifice of devotion, when awaking from sweet sleep, refreshed and renewed, he beholds all things as it were new created? The sun arises, and finds the cattle upon a thousand hills waiting for his appearance, and all the birds of the air ready to pay their tribute of thanksgiving for the return of his glorious and enlivening beams. And shall man—man, for whose use and benefit all these things were made—shall man alone lie buried in sleep, or, when risen, forget to worship his God? Shall he not rather rouse all his affections at once, with these and the like

strains of the sweet singer of Israel ;—"Awake up my glory, awake lute and harp," every organ of my body, and faculty of my soul ; "I myself will awake right early. O God, thou art my God ; early will I seek thee. I will sing of thy power, O Lord, and praise thy mercy betimes in the morning. I will magnify thee, O God my king, and praise thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I give thanks unto thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever." Now is the time for us to take a view beforehand of every thing that is to be done in the day, to offer it to God with purity of intention, and pray for his grace to direct us in all things ; but more especially in those instances, in which we are most likely to need it ; as the constitution, temper, situation, and circumstances of every person in the world make some particular temptations more dangerous to him than others. Again : who, that was in his senses, when the evening closes upon him, and consigns him to the darkness of the night, would venture to go to sleep (when, for aught he knows, he may awake in another world), without having first examined himself concerning the thoughts, words, and actions of the day, and so confessed and repented him of the sins therein committed, as to have rendered himself a proper object of the divine mercy through Christ, into whose hands he should now commend his spirit, as he would do with his dying breath. Blessed is he who thus begins and ends the day with God, and so passes a life of piety and peace. His sleep shall be sweet indeed. And sweetest of all shall be that last sleep, out of which he shall awake to glory, in the morning of the resurrection. With regard to Daniel's third hour of prayer, namely, noon, if they, who have it not in their power to retire for that purpose, would accustom themselves daily to think, at that hour, on Christ, who was then nailed to the cross for their sins, and lift up their souls to God in a short prayer for salvation by him, they would find themselves much strengthened and refreshed thereby. As to those whom God has blessed with more leisure, let them by all means follow Daniel's example, till they can find a better. Let them "kneel upon their knees THREE times a day ;" and let those who retire at that season to adorn their persons, take the opportunity of putting on the ornaments of grace, and renewing the spirit of their minds.

Lastly; this same great and fruitful example of holy Daniel affords us a direction likewise as to the matter of our devotions. He “prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” Prayer and thanksgiving therefore were the two parts of his daily service. What the nature of his prayer was, we may know from that recorded in the ninth chapter, where he sets himself to confess his sins, and those of his countrymen, and to entreat for mercy on Jerusalem, with a fervour and affection never to be exceeded. Our devotions then, according to this model, must consist of confession of sins; deprecation of the punishments and judgments acknowledged to be justly due to them; supplication for pardon, deliverance, and grace; and intercession for the church, and all included in her—our relations, friends, countrymen, and fellow Christians—and more especially for all the sons and daughters of affliction; the whole to be concluded with thanksgiving;\* concerning which we may observe, that no situation in this world can exclude the necessity, and take away the ground of it; since we find Daniel “giving thanks,” when the city and temple of God were in ashes, and himself a captive in Babylon. Even then, he not only “prayed,” but also “gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” And, indeed, nothing but a brutish stupidity can hinder any man from seeing reason to thank God, so long as he grants him life and space, by repentance and faith, to secure to himself a part and portion in the glories of eternity. The poorest beggar, in rags upon a dunghill, ought to bless and praise the Lord without ceasing, that he has yet this privilege allowed him; a privilege denied to so many thousand miserable spirits, whose day of grace has long since expired in the night of everlasting death. Whatever, therefore, be our lot in this world, let us remember the apostolical injunction, “In all things give thanks:” and, in order to stir ourselves up to the obeying it, let us only recount the mercies we have received through our Lord Jesus Christ, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spiritual and temporal, from the day of our birth to this present moment;

\* Let me be permitted to recommend to the reader, for his companion and directory in this way, “*The Devotions of Bishop Andrews*,” translated from the Greek by Dean Stanhope; a new and beautiful edition of which has been lately printed for Mr. Rivington, in St. Paul’s Churchyard.



and the result will be, it must be, that we shall all, the poorest and most afflicted among us, make the psalminist's resolution our's ;—" I will always give thanks unto the Lord, his praise shall ever be in my mouth." And whenever, like holy Daniel, we " kneel upon our knees to pray," we shall, at the same time, like him, " give thanks before our God."

Thus, therefore, does Daniel not only strip us of every excuse for neglecting our devotions, but give us likewise full instructions how to perform them, with regard to place, posture, time, and matter. And let the blessed effect and reward of his devotion fire our souls to an imitation of so great and glorious an example. Would we be delivered from the power of the devil, and the bitter pains of eternal death? Would we be holy, and just, and good? Would we be filled with wisdom and understanding in the counsels of the Almighty? Would we be high in the favour of heaven? Nay, would we be saved from temporal calamities, and brought to honour, esteem, and reverence, in the sight of men? Constancy in prayer can open a way to all these blessings. For if we ask—Why Daniel was preserved from the lions? Why he was endued with such innocency of life? Why he was admitted into the secrets of the divine economy? Why he was styled, by way of eminence, " the man greatly beloved?" And why the name of God was glorified by his promotion in a heathen court? The answer to all is—" He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God."

## DISCOURSE XXI.

### THE REDEMPTION OF TIME.

*Redeeming the time.*—Eph. v. 16.

MAN is often in scripture compared to a merchant; and there are three things more especially, which, considered in that capacity, he is enjoined to purchase at any rate. The

first is the kingdom of heaven, likened by our Saviour, in one of his parables, to "a pearl of great price, which a merchant having met with, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The second is truth.—"Buy the truth, saith Solomon, and sell it not." The third purchase we are to make is that mentioned in the text: "Redeeming the time." And this indeed opens the way to the other two; since it is by a right employment of our time, that we come to a knowledge and love of the truth, which leads us to the kingdom of heaven, through him, who is "the way, the truth, and the life."

The phrase, "redeeming the time," supposes us to have been formerly negligent in this sort of spiritual traffic, and so to have suffered loss; which therefore we are to make up, by taking every opportunity of trading to advantage for the future.

The inestimable value and right of improvement of time are therefore the subjects suggested to our meditations by these words of the apostle; in the prosecution of which, let us consider, why time should be redeemed, and how it may be redeemed.

Time, little as men account of it, is the most choice and precious thing in the world.—"The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." And this God seems to have pointed out to us, by the very manner of his giving it; which is so different from that in which he vouchsafes his other gifts. For, whereas he is graciously pleased to bestow many of them upon us in large quantities, so that we can keep some store of them by us, with time it is not so. Of that there is but a moment in the world at once, which is taken away, when another is given. If, therefore, the value of a thing rises in proportion to its scarceness, what shall a man give, or rather what shall he not give, for the redemption of time, which is thus dealt out by heaven, like some rich and invaluable cordial, in single drops; to the end, doubtless, that not one of them should be suffered to fall to the ground? We take no account of time, but by the loss of it; the clock which strikes, informs us—not that we have so much in our possession, but that so much is gone from us: for which reason it hath been styled "the knell of a departed hour," which rings out for the death of another portion of our

time, admonishing us to make a better use of that which remains. The present moment only is our own. As to the future, God alone knows whether they will ever be present to us: and for the past, they are never more to return; which is a—

Second reason why time ought to be redeemed by all means in our power, because, when once past, it never returns. The merchant, who knows that there is a precious commodity to be purchased at a reasonable rate, by which his fortune may be made at once; and knows withal, that if he miss this, he shall never have such another opportunity;—what pains will he not take? How early will he rise; how late take rest? How diligent will he be in fitting out his vessel? With what haste will he put to sea? With what earnestness and anxiety will he watch the wind, and spread all his sails, to catch every breath that may waft him in time to the port for which he is bound? This is our very case, to a tittle. Time is that precious commodity, by a right use of which our fortunes are made for ever, for ever and ever, to all eternity. And time, when once gone, never returns. For where is yesterday? It is “with the years beyond the flood;” and we can as soon bring back one, as the other. Were all the princes of the earth to unite the wisdom of their counsels, and the might of their kingdoms, they could not recall one single moment. How plain and obvious is this to the common sense of every man. But who is there, that pays so much regard to this well known truth, as to regulate his conduct by it, and to make his actions conformable to his knowledge? Where is the Christian, who, in order to secure a portion in the glories of eternity by a right employment of his time, useth half the diligence which is continually used by the merchants of the earth, to purchase an uncertain tenure of its perishable goods? But so it is, that let us look where we will, whenever the things of this world are in view, we find men acting, in their several professions and callings, according to the best and most approved maxims of each; projecting their schemes wisely, and executing them vigorously; in a word, taking their measures as if they were in earnest; whereas, behold the same men, considered as Christians, engaged in the concerns of a better world; and a view of their conduct is really sufficient to make a thinking unbeliever conclude, that nine

parts in ten of them either believe no more than himself, or else that a statute of lunacy should forthwith be taken out against them. If, therefore, we acknowledge, that time once past never returns, let us acknowledge likewise, that this is a good reason why we should redeem what is past, by making a right use of what is present. And let us act accordingly.

A third reason why time ought to be redeemed, is the consideration that it must be accounted for. A steward intrusted with the management of his lord's goods, and a person employed to trade for another, should of all men be the most diligent and careful; seeing that, at a certain stated time, they are to deliver in an account of what they received, and the profits they have made; upon the fidelity and exactness of which, their future welfare is to depend. By these two cases, our Lord has thought proper to represent to us our state and condition in this life, in the parable of the unjust steward, and that of the ten talents. The goods and talents committed to our trust, to manage and improve to the best advantage, are all the gifts of God, whether those of nature, fortune, or grace, that is, in short, every thing we are, and every thing we have. Of the use and improvement we shall have made of all these, an account is to be delivered in at a day appointed; and our eternal welfare depends upon its being such an one as will abide the strict scrutiny of him who committed them to us. The steward, who was found to have wasted his lord's goods, was dismissed from his service; the unprofitable servant, who, instead of trading with his talent, buried it in the earth, had that talent taken from him, and was "cast into outer darkness, where was weeping and gnashing of teeth." Now time being, as I have shown, one of the choicest and most precious gifts of God to men, will, at the last great day, be accounted for with a strictness proportionable to its value. Let us therefore take care that the accuser of the brethren, the ever watchful and malicious adversary of our salvation, have it not in his power to lodge an accusation against us with our Lord, of our having wasted that good thing committed to us; of having hid that most precious talent in the earth, instead of trading with it to the best advantage; of having killed and buried our time in sensuality, sloth, and idleness. For this murder, like others, will not always be concealed; the hours destroyed in secret will appear, when



we least expect it, to the unspeakable terror and amazement of our souls: they arise from the dead, and fly away to heaven (whither they might have carried better news), and there tell sad tales of us, which we shall be sure to hear of again, when we hold up our hands at the bar, and they shall come as so many swift witnesses against us. The consideration therefore, that we are to account for our time, will be allowed as a third reason why it should be redeemed.

A fourth, and that no less strong and powerful than the former, is the shortness and uncertainty of human life. No man knows precisely when his accounts will be called for; but this he does know most infallibly, that it cannot be very long, and that it may be very soon.—“Why, alas, does mortal man think to live long, when he cannot promise to himself the next minute! How many have lamentably deceived their own hearts in this point, and been suddenly snatched away! How often do we hear, how often do we read, such a man is slain, another is drowned, a third has broke his neck with a fall; this man died eating, and that playing; one perished by fire, another by the sword, another of a disease, another was slain by thieves. Thus death is quickly the end of all, and man’s life passeth away like a shadow that departeth;”<sup>\*</sup> like a tale that is told; like a flower that fadeth; like a post that hasteth by; like a bubble that rises, and shines, and sinks again into the common mass; like a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth. This again is a truth universally acknowledged, insomuch that it is difficult to be for an hour in company, where the rapid progress of time is not made the subject of an observation. And yet we are under such a delusion in our reckonings of this matter, that although the time past be certain, and that which is future be to the last degree uncertain, yet we regard the former as nothing, and trust to the latter as if we could command at least half the days of Methuselah, and had entered an effectual caveat against any claim which death might have upon us, until the expiration of four hundred years. Whereas “though men be so strong,” that sometimes, and that but very seldom indeed, comparatively speaking, “they come to fourscore years, yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow, so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.” And what use does the psalmist make of this consideration? It

\* *Kempis.*

follows in the next verse but one;—"Lord, teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;" that is, teach us so to meditate on the shortness of our time, that we may improve it aright to the purposes of salvation. The same reflection, and the same inference drawn from it, occur in the 39th Psalm.—"When thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment: every man, therefore, is but vanity." This thought melts the heart of the royal suppliant into a religious tenderness, and, dissolved in penitential tears, he pours forth the following most affecting strains;—strains that should be continually in the mouth of the Christian pilgrim; "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with thine ears consider my calling; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength before I go hence, and be no more seen." It may be farther observed, upon this head, that we may learn an useful lesson from an enemy. It is said of the devil, that "he is come down upon the earth, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Now, if the shortness of the time allowed be an argument with him for labouring hard to destroy our souls, surely it ought to be one with us for labouring as hard to save them; especially if we consider what that work is, and the difficulty of accomplishing it, which shall therefore be the—

Fifth argument adduced for the redemption of time. Time ought to be redeemed, because of the work we have to do, and the difficulty of doing it. Did we see the husbandman dreaming away his time, when all his fields lay uncultivated; or the generals of an army killing an hour at cards, when the enemy was preparing to storm the camp; or a pilot asleep, when the ship was running directly upon a rock; and did all these allege, as the reason of their behaviour, that they had *nothing to do*, we should think a madhouse the only proper place for them: and we should think right. But why do we not perceive, that there is not less of absurdity and madness in the conduct of that Christian, who wastes his precious hours in idleness, and apologizes for it by saying, in the same manner, that he has *nothing to do*: when perhaps the work of his salvation, that

greatest of all works, the very work for which God sent him into the world, is not yet so much as entered upon, or even thought of. The heart lies fallow; it is overrun with corrupt lusts and evil affections; the ground not yet broken up, much less the seed sown; and the time of harvest approaching: the Christian husbandman, it seems, is dreaming, for he has *nothing to do*. The world, the flesh, and the devil, have united their forces, and temptation is at the gates, ready to carry all before it: the Christian warrior is taking his pastime, for he has *nothing to do*. The poor weather-beaten soul is driving, at the mercy of winds and waves, upon the stormy and tempestuous sea of this troublesome world, amidst rocks and quicksands: the Christian steersman is asleep, for he has *nothing to do*. Our Lord bids us watch and pray; he orders us to strive to enter in at the strait gate, by the narrow way; he enjoins us to labour for the meat that endureth; his apostle presses it upon us to work out our salvation; yet we can persuade ourselves, that we have *nothing to do*. How is it then? Are temptations fewer than they were, that there is no danger of falling into them, though we do not watch and pray against them? Is the gate grown wider, or the way made broader, that we may enter in without striving? Will the meat that endureth, any more than that which perisheth, drop into our mouths without labouring for it? Can we obtain salvation now, without working it out? Such news, perhaps, is sometimes brought us, and it cannot but be agreeable to flesh and blood. There is only one misfortune, which is, that it cannot possibly be true, the gospel of Jesus Christ being intended for the use of all ages and generations, and therefore remaining, like its Divine Author, “the same yesterday, to day, and for ever.” Nay, it seems to be a truth, as clear as scripture and experience can make any truth, that the world grows worse as it grows older; consequently, the difficulty of working out our salvation is increased in proportion, and fresh force is daily added to the apostolical argument;—“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” And thus much, for the fifth reason, why time ought to be redeemed, namely, the work we have to do, and the difficulty of doing it.

The last reason shall be this; because we have already lost so large a proportion of the time allowed us for the

purpose. For if we consider how many of our first years passed in a state of childhood ; how many more were played away in the heat and folly of youth ; how long it was before we sat down to reflect upon our true condition in this world, upon the works which Christ had done for us, and those which he had enjoined us to do, through his grace, for ourselves ; how high we might by this time have stood in the scale of virtue, had we well employed the numberless hours which we certainly might have well employed ; and withal, how low we now stand, by having neglected so to employ them ;—I say, if we seriously consider these things (for very serious considerations they are), we shall think it but reasonable that we endeavour, by double diligence, to repair former neglects—*reasonable* did I say? We shall embrace every opportunity with joy, and on our bended knees adore that mercy, so much beyond all we could hope for, which has made it possible for us by any means to redeem the time we have lost. For although this loss, through a strange thoughtlessness and blindness of mind, generally troubles and afflicts us less than any other, yet think what tribulation and anguish will seize upon us, if by these means our work should be found unfinished at the day of death ! How precious will the hours then seem, that have formerly been thrown away on trifles ! How many worlds shall we then be ready to offer for one of them ! And who can say, that it will be granted ? Think on those wretched spirits who mispent their time, while in the body, and are therefore now entered upon their portion of everlasting sorrow. What would *they* give for the opportunity vouchsafed us of being reconciled to God, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance ? Could any of them be released from their prison-house, and sent back into the world for one year, in how holy and heavenly a manner would they spend it ? How deeply would they mourn for their sins ! How fervently would they pray for pardon ! How earnestly would they exhort others to do likewise ! What therefore they would do, to be delivered from the bitter pains of eternal death, let us do, to avoid falling into them. I shall close this head with that amazing description, given us by St. John, in his Revelation, of a transaction which is one day to happen.—“ I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud,



and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was, as it were, the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he set his right foot in the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices." But this wonderful and glorious person has a message to deliver to the inhabitants of the world, far more terrible than his cry, or the seven thunders that followed it.—"And he lift up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are; and the earth, and the things that therein are; and the sea, and the things that are therein, that THERE SHOULD BE TIME NO LONGER." The proper inference surely is this;—"While we HAVE TIME, let us do good unto all men."

These then are the reasons why time should be redeemed; because it is the most choice and precious thing in the world; because, when once gone, it never returns; because it is to be accounted for; because it is so short and uncertain; because of the work we have to do, and the difficulty of doing it; and because we have already lost so large a proportion of the time allowed us to do it in.

In order to show how time *may* be redeemed, permit me to lay down a few short rules for the husbanding and improving it aright.

First. *Observe a method in the distribution of your time.* Every hour will then know its proper employment, and no time will be lost. Idleness will be shut out at every avenue, and with her that numerous body of vices, that make up her train.\* This method must vary, according to the different callings and circumstances of mankind. They whom God has blessed with plentiful fortunes, which set them above the necessity of engaging in any profession, are happy in this respect, that they have more command of their time, and, consequently, may give a larger proportion of it to the improvement of their minds, by reading, meditation,

\* It may be added, as a supplement to this rule—*Have always some work in hand, which may be going on, during the many intervals (for many there always will be) both of business and pleasure.* On this part of the subject, read the "Rambler," Vol. iii. No. 108. and consider well the instance of Erasmus, there adduced. Read likewise "Spectator," Vol. ii. Nos. 93, 94. and Vol. iv. No. 316.

and prayer, as well as to the searching out and relieving the wants of their poor neighbours. They, on the other hand, who must go forth to their work and to their labour, whether of mind or body, are happy in this respect, that a great part of their time is laid out for them, and they are prevented from wasting it in idleness, by the order of Providence. Be it their care to consecrate their labour to God, by regarding it as a penance imposed on them for sin, and performing it in a spirit of contentment and resignation, cheerfulness and joy, even as Christ performed his, looking for and hasting to that time, when they shall enter into the promised rest. In the morning, let the mind be seasoned with devotion and heavenly wisdom, to fit it for its employment; and in the evening, to prepare it for its repose. Let the sabbaths and festivals of the church be in no sense days of idleness, much less of vice and folly; but given to the works of religion and charity; that they may be to us, what they were designed to be to all, minute representations of the sabbath that remaineth for the people of God; little preludes to that everlasting jubilee, that shall be one day celebrated in the heavenly Canaan. Woe be to that man who wastes these hallowed portions of his time upon the concerns of the world, and the lusts of the flesh, doing nothing, or worse than nothing: stranger to the resurrection of Jesus, the glories of the saints, and the joys of heaven, he rejects the pledges of his eternal inheritance, and throws those jewels into the mire, that should have adorned his crown of righteousness.

Secondly. *Be moderate in your recreations.* Recreations, we all know, are necessary. It is the Christian's concern to take care that they are innocent; which they will be, if they give rise to no evil passion, such as anger, or avarice, too generally attendants upon games of all sorts; and if no more time be spent in them than is necessary to unbend the mind, and fit it for a return to its employment. But when recreation becomes (as of late in this nation) a trade and a profession, and is made a means of putting the soul upon the rack of contending passions, it no longer deserves the name, but is in reality a drudgery imposed by the adversary of human happiness upon those who will not give their time to the service of their Maker. In one word, it is *Egypt* and the *task-masters* over again. From which we

have reason to pray, that our good Lord would vouchsafe to deliver us all !

Thirdly. *Cut off, as much as may be, unnecessary visits.* Of all thieves, they are the worst, who rob us of our time, because for the loss of that no amends can ever be made us.\* And there are in every place some, who, being idle themselves, do their best endeavours to make others so; in which work, partly through a disposition in those others to be made so, and partly through a false fear and shame, which hinders them from fraying away such birds of prey, they are too often suffered to succeed. An assembly of such persons can be compared to nothing but a *slaughter-house*, where the precious hours, and oftentimes the characters of all their friends and acquaintance, are butchered without mercy. And perhaps there are few maxims that have more truth in them, than one laid down by a great master in the art of *holy living*. “No man can be provident of his *time*, who is not prudent in the choice of his *company*.”

Lastly. *Examine, every evening, how you have spent the day.* For how can that man know the state of his affairs, who keeps no account? The task, at first, will be irksome, and the adversary will try every way to make you neglect, and by degrees drop the practice. And why? Because he knows that no person, who continues it, will long remain under his power. It will let you into some secrets, that will greatly shock and alarm you. But you must know your follies—how else can you reform them? Whereas, when a constant and faithful performance of this exercise (the benefits and advantages of which are without number and without end) has brought you acquainted with your errors, every day will correct those of the preceding. You will find that God has given you time enough for every good purpose,† but none to waste. You will soon know the true value of time, and become an adept in the management of it. And of this be assured, for your comfort and encouragement, that the time rightly employed, be it when it may, is with God “an acceptable time;” and that every day well spent is to yourselves “a day of salvation.”

\* “On the Robbery of Time,” see a most excellent paper in “The Idler,” Vol. i. No. 14.

† This seems to be intimated to us in that question of our Lord—“Are there not twelve hours in the day?”—John xi. 9.

## DISCOURSE XXII.

PATIENCE PORTRAYED.

*Follow after patience.*—1 Tim. vi. 11

AMONG all the graces that adorn the Christian soul, like so many jewels of various colours and lustres, against the day of her espousals to the Lamb of God, there is not one more brilliant than this of patience; not one which brings more glory to God, or contributes so much toward making and keeping peace on earth; not one which renders a man more happy within himself, more agreeable to all about him; inso-much, that even they who themselves possess it not, yet are sure to commend it in others. They set their seal to the truth, though by so doing they condemn their own practice. Patience is a virtue common to us with God; it is the characteristic of Christ, and the leading precept of the gospel; it is recommended by the examples of all the saints; rendered necessary by the present state of man; and set off by the manifold inconveniences of its contrary, impatience, as well as its own incomparable excellencies and advantages. By enlarging upon these particulars, I shall endeavour to recommend this celestial grace to your esteem, and excite you to the attainment of so invaluable a treasure.

I. In the first place, patience is a virtue common to us with God. *Long-suffering* is his darling attribute; and what is dear in his sight, ought not to be less precious in ours. And how marvellous is *his* patience, who daily pours his blessings on those men, who as daily offend, affront, and dishonour him; making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, sending rain on the unjust as well as the just, and not excluding the worst of us from those blessings, to the least of which the best of us have no title. For the benefit of the guilty as well as the innocent, of the impious as well as the pious, of the ungrateful as well as the grateful, the seasons take their rounds, the elements work together, the



light and air exert their kindly influences, the fountains send forth their salutary streams, the corn fields grow yellow, the grapes ripen upon the vines, the boughs of the fruit trees bend down, the groves are clothed, and the pastures flourish. The gospel is still preached to those who slight it; salvation is still held forth to those who have so often dashed it from them; Christ is still offered to those who have blasphemed him. And although God be provoked every day, yet he holds his hand, and waits patiently, till the last minute of man's trial and the world's duration be past. Although he have the power in his own hands, and the weapons of his indignation are all ready, he defers to strike, if perhaps men may at length be led by his long-suffering to repentance; because "he wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted, and live;" and while judgment sleeps, mercy calls night and day to sinners,—“Why will ye die? Repent, and ye shall be forgiven; turn ye, and ye shall live.” Yet God's blessings are abused to the purposes of luxury and lasciviousness; his truth is denied; his commandments are broken; his church is persecuted; his ministers are insulted; his Son is crucified afresh; and his own long-suffering is made an argument against his existence—and he is still patient. What is man, then, that he should complain?

II. The patience which we so much admire in God, shone forth yet more amazingly in the person of his Son Jesus Christ. For was ever patience like that patience, which, descending from a throne of glory, bore a long imprisonment in the womb, to sanctify sinners; and lay in a stable, to bring them to a kingdom. Behold the Master baptized by the servant; and he, who alone could give remission of sins, submitting to be washed in the laver of regeneration. He fasts forty days, who filleth all things living with plenteousness, and who is himself the bread of life. He endures the temptations of Satan, and answers them one by one from the scriptures, who could have remanded him to his chains in a moment, by the word of his power. With his disciples he lived, not as their Lord, but the servant of all. How tenderly did he bear with all their ignorances and infirmities, leading them on gently, as they were able to follow him; and, that they might never refuse to do offices of kindness for each other, he washed all their feet, and

amongst them those of Judas, from whom he meekly received the kiss that betrayed him. How patiently did he endure the contradiction of sinners : and, in his disputes with the Jews, how lovingly did he try to persuade the incredulous, and to melt by kindness the hearts that were hardened ! How quietly did he submit to the insolence of the proud, and give place to the fury of the wrathful ; desirous, even to his last hour, to save, if possible, those murderers of the prophets, those rebels against their God. But when the time of his passion came, what railings and revilings were patiently heard by him—what mockery and insult patiently suffered ! How was he wounded, who heals every disease ? How was he crowned with thorns, who crowns his martyrs with unfading garlands ? How was “ he stripped naked, who clothes the field with flowers, and all the world with robes, and the whole globe with the canopy of heaven, and the dead with immortality ? ” How was he fed with gall and vinegar, who reaches out to his people the fruits of paradise, and the cup of salvation ? Innocent and righteous, nay, innocence and righteousness itself, he was numbered with the transgressors. The truth was oppressed by false witnesses ; he was judged, who is to judge the world ; the Word of God became dumb as a lamb before his shearers. And when, at the crucifixion, the heavens were confounded, and the earth trembled, and the sun, that he might not be forced to behold the villainy of the Jews, withdrew his shining, and left the world in darkness, still the blessed Jesus said nothing, and betrayed no emotion of anger, but endured without murmuring all that earth and hell could lay upon him, till he had put the last stroke to this most finished picture of perfect patience, and prayed for his murderers ; whom he has been ever since, and is now ready to receive, upon their repentance, not only to pardon, but to a participation of the glories of his kingdom.

III. The patience thus practised by Christ is enjoined by his holy gospel, being indeed the badge of that gospel, and its professors. For thus saith the blessed Jesus to all his disciples ;—“ Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that

ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Is the mind tempted to impatience by the disappointment of its desires, and the loss of worldly goods and enjoyments? The scripture, to eradicate the temptation, is full of precepts enjoining us to condemn the world, and not to set our hearts upon things that pass away, and that cannot satisfy the soul, when it is possessed of them. If our desires after these perishable goods are immoderate, our impatience at the loss of them will be always in proportion. And then, how shall he ever fulfil the royal law of charity, or willingly give away his money, who cannot part with it patiently, when God, in the course of his providence, is pleased to resume his own again? The worldly man is always impatient, because he prefers his body to his soul: the Christian prefers his soul to his body, and therefore knows how to give largely, and to lose patiently. Nay, he can be meek and resigned under all the injuries which malice can offer to his person; and to him who smites him on the one cheek, can present the other; rejoicing that he is counted worthy to suffer something for his Saviour, who suffered so much for him; and referring the decision of his cause to the righteous judgment of God at the last day. For what are we, that we should avenge ourselves, and not rather, by giving place unto wrath, at once disappoint the malice of the enemy, and secure to ourselves the patronage of heaven?

IV. We find all the saints of God, who have been eminent for their faith in Christ, to have been as eminent for their patience, without which their faith must have failed in the day of trial; it being not through faith alone, but, as the apostle says, "through faith and patience" that they "inherited the promises." Faith begat patience, which, like a dutiful child, proved the support of its parent. Abel, the first son of Adam, celebrated for his faith, through patience, continued faithful unto death, and so received the crown of life. Patience preserved Noah's faith all the time the ark was building, and while it floated upon the waters, which destroyed every thing else. Through patience, Abraham, endured the severest trial that faith was ever put to, and offered up his only son; who, through the same patience, neither lifted up his hand, nor opened his mouth against his

father. Through patience, Jacob, persecuted by his brother, quietly departed out of his own country, and afterward pacified him with gifts and presents. Through patience, Joseph endured and forgave the ill usage of his brethren, and fed them in the time of dearth. Through patience, Moses, so often abused and insulted, and only not stoned by a stiffnecked people, still entreated the Lord for them. Through patience, David would not slay his implacable enemy Saul, when he had him in his power, and afterward revenged his death by executing the person who slew him. Through patience Job endured the loss of all things, and the utmost malice of the tempter, and came forth as choice gold from the furnace of adversity, an example for all ages and generations to follow. Through patience, St. Paul lived a life of incessant toil and trouble, and rested not till he had accomplished the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, and preached the gospel to the heathen world. Through patience, in a word, the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs and confessors, fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith, neither allured nor terrified from their duty, but triumphing, upon the rack, and in the flames, over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and going to "the kingdom," through "the patience of Jesus Christ."

V. The present state of man renders the practice of this virtue absolutely necessary for him, if he would enjoy any happiness here, or hereafter. Could we, indeed, live in the world without suffering, then were there no need of patience. But thus runs the universal sentence;—"Cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground, out of which thou wast taken." By this sentence are we all bound, as by a chain of adamant; and every man, "from him that sitteth upon the throne, to him that lieth in the dungeon," must have labour and sorrow for his portion, till he depart out of this mortal life. And to this sad truth we all bear testimony, as soon as we come into it. The cries of the new born infant testify that it is born to sorrow. Tribulation, thus necessarily entailed upon us, admits of no remedy but patience; the reasonableness



of which is strongly enforced by the consideration, that *our* sufferings are the punishment of our sins. —“ We indeed receive the due reward of our deeds : ” one man only suffered, who “ had done nothing amiss ” In Christians it is more especially requisite, who, besides the ordinary calamities of life, have the devil with all his wiles to resist, the flesh with all its desires to mortify, the world with all its temptations and terrors to overcome. The devil cannot be resisted, the flesh cannot be mortified, the world cannot be overcome, without patience ; by which alone repentance is perfected, faith is supported, hope is preserved alive, charity is nourished, and all those holy tempers are formed in us, which Christ, in his sermon on the mount, hath pronounced *blessed* ; yea, and they ever shall be blessed. We therefore surely have of all men the most need of patience, that, after we have thereby done and suffered the will of God, we may receive the promises : for the promises are these—“ He that endureth to the end shall be saved. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” But how shall we endure to the end ? How shall we be faithful unto death, if we have not patience ? as the wise man pathetically exclaims ; —“ Woe unto you that have lost patience ; and what will ye do, when the Lord shall visit you ? ” \* Patience is the only armour that is proof against all assaults, and he who has well buckled it on need fear no temptation. Money cannot tempt him, who can endure poverty : honour cannot corrupt him, who can endure disgrace : pleasure cannot seduce him, who can endure pain : in short, nothing can prevail over him, who can endure all things, waiting the Lord’s time for his deliverance and reward. Over him the evil one hath no power, and all the comfort to be had in this world is his. It is vain to say, “ Blessed is the man that hath no trouble ; ” for there is no such man, nor ever was, nor ever will be ; but we must say, “ Blessed is the man who best beareth that portion of trouble, which falleth to his share.”

VI. The manifold inconveniences of impatience will set this truth off to great advantage. As patience is the attribute of God, impatience had its beginning from Satan.—“ Through envy of the devil (saith the wise man) came death into the world.” And whence proceeds envy, but from impatience of beholding the happiness of another ?

\* Eccles. ii. 14.

Impatience and malice therefore had one father, and they have grown together in his children ever since. An impatient desire of the forbidden fruit lost Paradise, which patience, to persevere in obedience to the commandment, had preserved to this day. Impatient at beholding his brother's sacrifice accepted, and his own rejected, Cain murdered Abel. Unable, through impatience, to bear the uneasiness of hunger, Esau sold his birthright. Through impatience, the patriarchs moved with envy at the love which Jacob bore to Joseph, and the predictions of his exaltation, sold their brother into Egypt. Through impatience, the Israelites, when Moses was gone up into the Mount, turned aside to idolatry. Through impatience of a superior, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, became schismatics and rebels. And, to mention no more examples, through impatience of sound doctrine, and wholesome reproof, the Jews killed the prophets, and crucified the Son of God. In a word, as patience is the foundation of all good, impatience is the seedplot of all evil, which may not improperly be called "impatience of good;" as no man commences vicious, but for want of patience to persevere in virtue, and to resist temptation. And as that which is the cause of sin can be but an ill cure for sorrow, he that is impatient under any load which it pleases God to lay upon him, only renders it heavier, and new points the thorns of the fall, that they may the more sensibly gall and afflict him. All sufferings are infinitely aggravated by impatience, and some owe their very being to it; insomuch, that a peevish fretful temper will be "vexed, even as a thing that is raw," by every object it touches; it will most ingeniously contrive to keep itself always on the rack, on account of trifling incidents, which, in a mind endued with the grace of patience, could not have produced the least shadow of uneasiness. In this, therefore, as in other cases, God hath annexed a blessing to virtue, and hath made man's real happiness to consist in the performance of his duty.

Lastly. Let me set before you, in one view, the incomparable excellencies and advantages of this lovely grace of patience. Patience, then, commends us to God, and keeps us his. Patience is the guardian of faith, the preserver of peace, the cherisher of love, the teacher of humility. Patience governs the flesh, strengthens the spirit, sweetens the

temper, stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride; she bridles the tongue, refrains the hand, tramples upon temptations, endures persecutions, consummates martyrdom:—Patience produces unity in the church, loyalty in the state, harmony in families and societies: she comforts the poor, and moderates the rich: she makes us humble in prosperity, cheerful in adversity, unmoved by calumny and reproach: she teaches us to forgive those who have injured us, and to be the first in asking forgiveness of those whom we have injured: she delights the faithful, and invites the unbelieving: she adorns the woman, and approves the man: is loved in a child, praised in a young man, admired in an old man: she is beautiful in either sex, and every age. Behold her appearance and her attire. Her countenance is calm and serene as the face of heaven unspotted by the shadow of a cloud, and no wrinkle of grief or anger is seen in her forehead. Her eyes are as the eyes of doves for meekness, and on her eyebrows sit cheerfulness and joy. Her mouth is lovely in silence; her complexion and colour that of innocence and security; while, like the virgin, the daughter of Sion, she shakes her head at the adversary, despising and laughing him to scorn. She is clothed in the robes of the martyrs, and in her hand she holds a sceptre in the form of a cross. She rides not in the whirlwind and stormy tempest of passion, but her throne is the humble and contrite heart, and her kingdom is the kingdom of peace.\*

If, therefore, to be made like unto God; if to be conformed to the image of Christ; if to follow the precepts of the gospel; if to write after the copies of saints; if to render our present state comfortable, and ensure our final redemption from sin and sorrow; if to avoid the manifold inconveniences of impatience, and enjoy the incomparable excellencies and advantages of patience; if these are things desirable, let us from henceforth give ourselves to the pursuit of this divine virtue; let us “follow after patience.” And for this purpose, let us adore and imitate the long-suffering of God; let us contemplate and transcribe into our practice the patience of Jesus Christ; let us study and fulfil the precepts of the gospel; let us look at and emulate the examples of

\* The portrait here presented to the reader is copied from Tertullian's noble treatise on the subject, to which we owe that of Cyprian. This Discourse is an abstract of both.

the saints; let us consider and alleviate the sorrows of our pilgrimage; let us perceive and avoid the horrible consequences of impatience; let us court till we obtain the heavenly grace of patience, with her dowry of benefits and blessings conferred on her by Jesus Christ, into whose patience the Lord direct your hearts, until she have her perfect work in the salvation of your souls, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due in all churches of the saints, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, now and evermore. Amen.

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## DISCOURSE XXIII.

### THE GREAT ASSIZE.

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*He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.—Acts xvii. 31.*

THE distinction between good and evil hath been, from the beginning, the great end of the law of heaven, at sundry times and in divers manners promulgated to the sons of men. From this celestial fountain particular systems of human laws have been drawn forth, and adapted to the exigencies of different ages and countries, by wise and good men; they have been enacted by the authority of kings, with the advice of senates, and carried into execution by faithful and diligent magistrates, “to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of true religion and virtue.” The advantages of these institutions, and the praise and honour which are due from all mankind to those who employ the treasures of learning, and exert the powers of eloquence, for the public good, must be evident to every one who thinks but a moment upon the subject. The excellent Hooker closes a survey of law, in all its different departments, with the following encomium, conceived and expressed in a



manner peculiar to himself.—“Of law there can be no less acknowledged, than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempt from her power. Both angels, and men, and creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.”

But, true and just altogether as this character of law in general most certainly is, yet it must be confessed, that the penal sanctions of human laws will not always come up to the necessity of the case, nor will the medicine reach the disorder, in a multitude of instances. It is in the power of the civil magistrate to chastise many public enormities, to regulate, in some measure, the external deportment of men, and to preserve the frame of society from suffering those convulsions, which must otherwise bring on a speedy dissolution. But when prudence hath enacted all her statutes, and entrusted vigilance with the execution of them, men will still continue to “put evil for good, and good for evil.” Monsters of iniquity will creep from their dens, to infest and annoy the public, although they cannot be dragged from thence, to suffer as they deserve. Much wickedness must remain unpunished, and great misery must go unrelieved. Avarice and ambition will conceive and bring forth crimes, of which no earthly tribunal can take cognizance. Some sins will be too common, and some sinners too powerful, to be animadverted upon in this world. The prosperous villain will often die unmolested in his bed, and bequeath the fruits of his oppression to his heir; while injured innocence shall descend before him with sorrow to the grave, and quickly pass away out of remembrance. The orphan’s cries will still ascend to heaven; the tears will still run down the widow’s cheek; and the poor man will frequently find no helper upon earth. This the royal preacher and judge of Israel saw, who was so renowned through all the world for his wisdom and justice; he saw, and mourned the impossibility of preventing it.—“I considered, says he, all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, but

they had no comforter.”\* The conclusion which king Solomon drew from what he saw of this kind under the sun, must be adopted by us likewise.—“ I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.”† The interests of virtue and justice require that many causes should be heard, which cannot be brought to a trial here below; and therefore the day will surely come, when God shall erect a tribunal universal and scrutinizing as the light of heaven; where all those offences, which the best of magistrates taken from among men are necessitated to suffer and overlook, shall be inquired into by himself. And when we behold this august assembly, our thoughts are naturally carried on to that great and awful process, the consideration of which will furnish the best rules for the conduct of all who are concerned in these earthly judicatories; from whence there lieth an appeal to the judgment seat of Christ. There every cause must be reheard, and finally determined, until virtue and vice shall be distinguished, by the voice of God adjudging them to separate habitations for evermore.—“ He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.”

The words direct us to employ our meditations on the appointment of a day for judgment; the person and appearance of the judge, and the judgment itself.

Man may abuse his liberty, and transgress the law of the great King; but the punishment will follow and overtake the offence, though not immediately; nor can we deduce any inference from its being deferred, but that God is merciful, and that the sinner should repent. The day of vengeance was fixed from the foundation of the world; but it was likewise then determined, that another day should precede it, commensurate to the duration of this present system, which may be called the day of man, when the earth is given into his hands, and he executes his will upon it. Now he may “ rejoice, and let his heart cheer him;” he may “ walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes;” he may devote his youth to pleasure, sacrifice his manhood to ambition, and wear out his old age in avarice. He may corrupt the innocent for the indulgence of the first, depopulate kingdoms for the gratification of the second, and impoverish thousands to satisfy the cravings of the last. But let him

\* Eccles. iv. 1.

† Ibid. iii. 17.

know, that “for all these things God will bring him into judgment,” in that day, which the scriptures therefore style *his* day, “the day of God,” or “the day of the Lord.” Then God shall speak, and man must hear; then the viol and the harp shall no longer lull the effeminate in sensuality, nor the trumpet any more rouse the warrior to the battle; and then the thousands of gold and silver shall have lost all their charms in the eyes of the miser. In that day, the merry hearted shall sigh, shame shall be the portion of pride, and covetousness shall inherit eternal poverty. Of these two days, the day of man, and the day of God, which give so very different an aspect to the world and all that is therein, the sacred history holdeth forth to us many significant and instructive representations in the divine proceedings with regard to particular persons, cities, and kingdoms. These answer the same end with the solemn scene now before our eyes, being intended as preludes, or (if I may so speak) as *rehearsals* of the judgment to be finally executed upon the world of the ungodly. Thus, when the divine long-suffering waited in the time of Noah; when the wicked vexed the soul of righteous Lot in Sodom; when Pharaoh oppressed the church in Egypt; when the ten tribes, revolting from the service of God, and the house of David, became and continued schismatics, rebels, and idolaters; when Zedekiah threw the prophet Jeremiah into the dungeon, for declaring the will of heaven; and when the Jews crucified Christ, and persecuted his apostles, for the same reason; then was it, respectively in each case, the day of man. But it was the day of God, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the antediluvian generations swept away from the face of the earth; when the windows of heaven were opened, to rain fire and brimstone upon the cities of the plain; when Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore; when Salmanazar led Ephraim away into Assyria; when Nebuchadnezzar carried Judah captive to Babylon; and when the Roman armies overthrew Jerusalem, and set fire to the gates of Zion. But the united terrors of all these partial visitations will enable us to form only a faint idea of that great and terrible day, when God “shall judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.” Let us consider the person and appearance of him who shall then come to be our judge.

The text characterizes him by the words, "that man whom he [God] hath ordained." The human nature of our Lord, ever intimately and indissolubly united to the divine, being, after his resurrection, taken up into heaven, was thereupon, in form, amidst the acclamations of angels and beatified spirits, invested with the glory and dominion of the Godhead, to be from thenceforth displayed and exercised in the government of his church; until the final act of judgment shall close the amazing scene, and put a period to the mediatorial kingdom; which when the Son, the man Christ Jesus, shall have delivered up to the Father, then God, or the blessed Trinity, shall be all in all, reigning and ruling to eternity, as was the case from eternity, previous to the intervention of the Christian system. In the mean time, as the light which fills the circumference of heaven, penetrating to the utmost bounds of creation, and giving life and motion to all things that live and move, proceedeth forth from its central throne in the body of the sun; so the riches, and the wisdom, and the providence, and the power, and the majesty of the Deity, are dispensed to mankind, through the glorified humanity of the holy Jesus; to whom every creature in heaven and earth is therefore taught to ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power. Thus hath it been done unto the man whom God delighteth to honour. And for this reason it is said, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son;" in exact conformity to what St. Paul asserteth in the text, that "God shall judge the world" in the person of his son Christ Jesus; "he shall judge the world by that man, whom," having united to himself, "he hath ordained" and constituted head over all things for that purpose.

And by whom should God judge mankind, but by that man by whom he first redeemed them?—"God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and God in Christ will reward every man according to his works." He who took upon him the form of a servant, was crowned king of glory; and crowned for that reason.—"Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name;" therefore by himself he hath sworn, that to him, when sitting on the throne of judgment, "every knee should bow, and every tongue



confess, that the man Christ Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

And can there then be a tongue, which doth not exult in the confession of the glorious and salutary truth? For surely had heaven indulged us in the option of our judge, where could all our wishes have centred, but in a man like ourselves; our near kinsman, our brother, as concerning the flesh; one who bore our sins, and carried our sorrows: one in all things tempted like as we are, and therefore touched with a feeling of our infirmities. In whose hands should we rather desire to see the law, than in his, who, having himself fulfilled it for us, bestows on repentance what was only due to innocence? Whom can we behold with so much comfort on the judgment seat, as the person who once stood at the bar, and suffered the execution of an unjust sentence, that we might escape the execution of a just one. And since we must needs be tried by unerring wisdom, impartial justice, and boundless power, what a reviving consideration is it, that they are under the direction of infinite and tenderest mercy? Abused and insulted mercy, indeed, will rule with a rod of iron, and no wrath can be so terrible as that of the Lamb: but the humble penitent, believing in Jesus as a Saviour, and obeying him as a Master, shall behold with joy the golden sceptre reached forth, in the day of his appearance as a judge.

The signs which are to precede that appearance, and like so many heralds to prepare the way for it, shall be eminently calculated for the purpose. Strange and portentous phenomena shall cause a fearful looking for of judgment, while every part of the creation shall discover horrible symptoms of its approaching dissolution. The heavens, those most beautiful and glorious of the works of God, shall shrink at the prospect of the fire in which they are to melt; and the powers of the heavens, which sustain the world, shall be shaken, as the leaves of the wood are shaken by a mighty wind. The sun, that marvellous instrument, that fountain of light, that heart of the system, whence are the issues of life, and health, and joy, shall suddenly cease from shining, and by that means depriving the moon of her borrowed brightness, shall leave the astonished inhabitants of the world in darkness and the shadow of death. The stars, quitting their stations and courses, and falling in wild dis-

order on each other, shall increase the horrors of the night spread over the world, an image of the darkness soon to receive the wicked for ever. The sea meanwhile will rise into vast mountains, and roll itself upon the shore, with the most tremendous and terrifying noise. All these things shall come upon the earth, at a time when it is filled with wars and rumours of wars; when there shall be sore distress of nations, visited with all the judgments of God, and become the scourges and destroyers of each other; when divine truth, like the sun, shall be obscured; when the church, as well as the moon, shall be turned into blood, through the abundance of persecutions; and when they, who, for the brightness of their doctrines, and the purity of their lives, shone as the stars, through the prevalence of iniquity and temptation, shall fall away from their integrity, minding earthly things, and worldly interests. Consternation and perplexity unutterable shall seize and distract the hearts of men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the changes about to happen.

And now, the voice of that trumpet, which was once heard from the top of Sinai, shall again be heard from heaven; and the Judge of all the earth shall make his entry with power and great glory, having in his retinue an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of the righteous. Thus attended, he shall descend toward us, riding upon the clouds of heaven, and take his seat on the throne prepared for him. There he shall be seen, in the form and fashion of a man, exceeding glorious, clothed with the robes of majesty and honour. From hence we may suppose him opening his commission, in those words of his own;—"All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The apostles are placed around him; the court is set; and all things are prepared for him to "judge the world in righteousness." The nature and manner of this judgment call for our strictest attention.

Let us therefore transfer our thoughts from a temporary tribunal to the throne of eternal judgment. And here it must be considered, that as the whole world is become guilty before God, so we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Not only they who shall be found alive at his coming, but they also who shall have been detained by

death in the prisons of earth and sea. For at the sound of the last trumpet, the prison doors shall be opened, and all that are within shall come forth to judgment. "I saw the dead," saith the well beloved John, "I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God." All the senates that ever were convened, and all the assemblies that ever met upon business or pleasure; all the armies that were ever conducted into the field, and all the generals who conducted them; all the kings and princes who ever swayed a sceptre, and all the multitude of the nations that were ever in subjection under them; in a word, all the men and women that shall have lived, from the first pair to their last born son and daughter, are to appear together, and to take their respective trials, at the day of the great assize. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, will then be distinguished only by their virtues and their vices; so that the whole world shall perceive and acknowledge, that "God is no respecter of persons." The injured virgin, the afflicted widow, and the oppressed orphan, shall then see those, face to face, who have spoiled them of their innocence, their reputation, or their substance. There men shall meet all those who have seduced them, or whom they have seduced, into the ways of sin; and all those who have directed and encouraged them, or whom they have directed and encouraged, to proceed in the paths of righteousness. From the former they shall turn away, with shame and fear; the latter they shall behold with joy and rejoicing. There they shall view the wisdom of religion in the persons of the righteous, and wonder why they did not see it before, and give themselves up to the study of it; there they shall clearly behold the folly of irreligion in the persons of the wicked, and be astonished at their insensibility in following so hard after it. Amidst all this unimaginable multitude, there shall not be one idle and unconcerned spectator; not one that shall have leisure to trouble himself with the affairs of his neighbour. Every man will have a cause to be heard, and how will he be straitened, until it be determined?

The prisoners, thus brought to the bar, are to be judged concerning the counsels of their hearts, the words of their lips, and the works of their hands, which will be found registered against them in the volumes of their consciences. These volumes, indeed, are often closed during the present

life, by the hands of negligence and forgetfulness. But at the last day they shall be unfolded to all the world. These, perhaps, are the books, which, as Daniel and St. John inform us, shall be opened before the throne of Christ, that men may be judged out of those things which are written therein. The dust shall be wiped away from these important writings; each obliterated character shall be renewed and restored; and a light shining from above shall make them legible to every eye. There is nothing now hidden, which shall not then be known; nothing spoken or done in the secret chambers, which shall not be proclaimed in public. Conscience shall then do the work perfectly, which, through our own faults, it doth at present imperfectly; and we shall know, as we are known; we shall know ourselves, as God knoweth us. But, besides this, the great Accuser shall stand forth at the last day in his proper character, and aggravate with all his malice the sins, to the commission of which he tempted the ungodly.—“These wretches,” may he say to the Judge, “my power never created, nor my providence sustained; I never was incarnate, nor did I ever hang three hours upon the cross for them; I gave them no grace, and promised them no glory. Yet, by their own choice, they have forsaken thee, who didst all this for them, and voluntarily yielded themselves servants to me. Mine therefore they are, and with me shall be their portion.” They who have beheld the countenance of a malefactor, when suddenly confronted by an accomplice appearing as an evidence against him, may form some idea of that confusion which shall overwhelm the sinner, when conscience, awaking out of sleep, shall witness his iniquity to his face; when the very thoughts of his heart shall be made manifest, and the tempter shall be his accuser.

Nor shall the faithful escape the malice of him who is styled the accuser of the brethren; but he shall accuse them also before their God; alleging against them the follies of their youth, and the infirmities of their old age; their fruitless repentances, and frequent relapses; their excesses in the pleasures of sense, and their deficiencies in the duties of religion; the wanderings of their prayers, and the coldness of their charity; and, alas, if God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who could stand? But for those, who believe upon the preaching of the gospel, who lay hold



on the benefits of that act of grace, and come in upon the easy terms of the Christian covenant, for them there is *Παρακλητος*, an *advocate*, ready to appear, even the Spirit, which now “maketh intercession for them,” and shall do the same at the last day; against the allegations of Satan, pleading the merits of the Redeemer, and the promised pardon made effectual by grace; what he wrought *for* his people, and what he wrought *in* them; the groans and the tears of the penitent, the fastings and the watchings, the prayers and the alms of the faithful; the weakness and imperfection of which shall be forgiven, and they shall be accepted, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the beloved; through whose blood all shall be saved, who depart in the faith and fear of God, notwithstanding their lapses through infirmity, in the days of their flesh. These, therefore, go to the portion on the right hand, because the Lord their God doth answer for them. They shall hear the joyful sound of pardon and peace: the angels who ministered to them, and often rejoiced at their repentance, shall place them in everlasting habitations of pleasure and glory; while the wicked, forsaken by their guardians, and condemned by the righteous judgment of their God, are consigned over to the executioners of eternal vengeance.

A consideration of these important truths suggesteth the best rules for the conduct of those who are concerned in human judicatories.

Mindful, therefore, of “that man by whom God shall judge the world in righteousness,” he who sitteth on the seat of judgment, as the representative of an earthly sovereign, will consider himself likewise as *his* minister, “by whom kings reign, and princes decree judgment,” and at whose bar kings and princes, with all in authority under them, must one day appear. At present, “God standeth in the congregation of princes,” observing the manner in which they exercise the power delegated to them; but hereafter he shall *sit* as a *judge* even of them, who, by reason of that delegated power, are styled *gods*. The care then of the Magistrate, when he goeth up to the judgment seat, will be, to put on righteousness as a glorious and beautiful robe; and to render his tribunal a fit emblem of that eternal throne, of which justice and judgment are the habitation.

Mindful of those holy and exalted personages, who shall sit with their Lord upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, they to whom the laws of their country commit the lives and properties of their fellow subjects, will not suffer themselves to be biassed by any worldly considerations. They will neither be intimidated by the frowns of the mighty, nor seduced by the promises of the opulent, to depart one step from the disinterested uprightness and integrity, which characterize the apostles of the Son of God.

Mindful of that true and faithful witness which every man carries in his bosom, which no gift can blind, no power can silence, or prevent its appearing, to testify concerning his thoughts, his words, and his actions, at the last day, they who are called upon to give evidence, will do it with simplicity and sincerity; neither palliating the crimes of the guilty, nor aggravating the calamities of the wretched; but so speaking "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," as their consciences will hereafter infallibly do, and as they expect help from the God of their salvation, in that dreadful hour.

Mindful of that blessed and gracious Spirit, who now "maketh intercession for us with unutterable groanings," and who shall plead our cause at the judgment seat of Christ, the advocate will rejoice in the godlike task of patronizing the injured and oppressed; of contributing, by his skill and industry, toward the elucidation of truth, the detection of villainy, and the vindication of innocence. But he will never employ his learning for the establishment of falsehood, nor display his eloquence in favour of injustice.

Mindful of their happy lot, whom mercy shall receive to glory, and of their sad estate, whom justice shall hurry away to torments, we shall all provide against that day, which is to determine our fate for everlasting ages. Should a door of hope be opened to those unhappy wretches who are now reserved in chains, to be brought forth to judgment, before an earthly judge, how eagerly would they press into it? Could sorrow for their past offences, and unfeigned resolutions of amendment, procure the royal pardon, restore them to a state of probation, and enable them to lay hold on life, how thankful would they be for the offer, how readily would they close with the proposal? This favour is graciously vouchsafed to us. For "behold, now is the accepted time;

behold, now is the day of salvation. The Judge standeth before the door," but his entrance is not yet. The evangelical act of grace continueth in full force, and all are invited to partake of the benefits of it; that so, having repented, and believed the gospel, having kept the faith in a pure conscience, and kept it unto the end, they may obtain their pardon under the seal of the living God, and receive the promised reward, in the day of eternal recompense. For "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." While, therefore, we bless God, who preserveth to us the administration of justice in our land, let the present solemnity, by reminding us of the trial we likewise must undergo, be made profitable in things pertaining not only to this life, but also to that which is to come; that so, when we shall all meet again, after our separation by the chances of life, and the stroke of death, we may remember, that we met on this day; and remember, with pleasure, that we met not in vain.

## DISCOURSE XXIV.

THE ORIGIN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

*He is the minister of God to thee for good.*—Rom. xiii. 4.

IT is impossible for any one to consider with attention, the harmony in which all the parts of the natural world conspire to act for the benefit of the whole, without feeling an ardent desire to learn, by whom, and in what manner, they were first framed and compacted together; how the agents were suited to the patients, and the causes proportioned to the effects; so that the former have ever since operated invariably in the production of the latter; and the result hath been an uniform obedience to the laws originally imposed upon inanimate matter.

A diligent survey of the blessings, for which the moral

world is indebted to civil polity, and the due execution of its edicts, must needs excite a curiosity equally earnest, and equally laudable, to inquire into the origin of so useful and necessary an institution; to know, at what time, and under whose direction, a machine was constructed, capable, by a variety of well adjusted springs and movements, of controlling the irregularities of depraved nature, and of insuring to us, amidst the restless and contradictory passions and affections of sinful men, a quiet possession of our lives and properties.

A "state of nature" hath been supposed by writers of eminence upon this subject, "when men lived in a wild and disorderly manner; and though they had a principle of restraint from religion, and a kind of general law, that exacted punishment of evildoers, yet, as the administration of this law was in common hands, and they had no one arbiter, or judge, with authority over the rest, to put this law, with any regularity, in execution; so, from the excess of self love, many mutual violences and wrongs would ensue, which would put men upon forming themselves into civil societies, under some common arbiter, for remedy of this disorder."—And it hath been, accordingly, concluded, that "the civil magistrate was called in as an ally to religion, to turn the balance, which had too much inclined to the side of that inordinate self love."

In the "wild and disorderly state" here supposed, when mankind were mere savages, it is not easy to conceive, how they had obtained "a principle of restraint from religion," or "a kind of general law, that exacted punishment of evildoers." And it is no less difficult to imagine, what benefit could accrue to them from either; since, as the religion had no priest, to teach and enforce it, the law had no magistrate, to promulgate and to execute it. "The administration of this law was in *common hands*," that is, in the hands of every man, who had his own law, canon as well as statute, suited to his present occasion, convenience, or caprice. And what was this, but to be truly and properly destitute both of law and religion?

As this independent state of nature was a state of perfect liberty; and as they, who had the happiness to live under so pure and primitive a dispensation, were, doubtless, too sensible of their happiness, to exchange it readily for govern-



ment, always liable to degenerate into tyranny and oppression, it is obvious to think, that when the project for "calling in the civil magistrate as an ally to religion" was first proposed, it would not fail to meet with a very vigorous opposition. "An inordinate self love," we find, was in possession: and no possessor is with more difficulty ejected. Of the privilege enjoyed by every man, to do without control what was "right in his own eyes," every man would be exceedingly tenacious; and no one, who thought himself, by his superior strength of body, or intellect, better entitled to an ox, or an ass, than his neighbour, could be presently made to see the propriety of his suffering, for the good of the community.

"The free consent of every individual, we are told, is necessary to be obtained for the institution of civil government." But, upon what plain shall the universal assembly be convened? Or who, in a state of nature, hath authority to convene it? How shall the proceedings of this tumultuary congress of independents be regulated, or the votes of its members be collected? And when will all agree to invest some with a power of inflicting pains and penalties, which others cannot but be sensible they shall soon incur?

It is by no means reasonable to imagine, that each person would consent from thenceforth to be determined by a majority of the whole body, which might chance, upon questions of the utmost importance, to exceed the minority, only by a single vote. And that one half of the society should thus domineer over the other half, it would be deemed an infringement on liberty, to which men, born free and equal, might, with great appearance of reason, scruple to subject themselves.

It is indeed sometimes asserted, that "no man can submit himself to the absolute will of another:" in which case, he certainly cannot submit himself to any government whatsoever; since the *legislature*, in every government, is absolute, having a power to repeal or dispense with its own laws, upon occasions, of which itself is judge.

The reason assigned for the above assertion, "that no man can submit himself to the absolute will of another," is this, that "no man can give that of which himself is not possessed, namely, the power over his own life." But how then came any government to be invested with a power of

life and death? And what would a government avail, which was not invested with that power? If laws, inflicting capital punishments, are frequently broken, in what a state would the world be, if there were no such laws? Here, then, is a *dignus vindice, nodus*; and therefore, *DEUS intersit!* For, without the interposition of some power superior to human, a system of civil polity, calculated to answer, in any degree, the end of its institution, can neither be framed, nor supported.

And the truth is, when we reflect a little farther upon the subject, we cannot but perceive our apprehensions greatly shocked at the supposition, that the wise and good Creator, who formed mankind for society in this world, and designed to train them, by a performance of its duties, for a more noble and exalted fellowship with angels in the world to come, should place them, at the beginning, in the above-mentioned wild and disorderly state of independence, to roam in fields and forests, like the brutes that perish, and to search for law and government, where they were not to be found; that he should give them no rules, by whom, or how they should be guided and directed, but leave them to choose for themselves, that is, to dispute and fight, and, in the end, to be governed by the strongest. One cannot think of multitudes in such a state of equality, with fierce and savage tempers and dispositions, prepared to contend for superiority, but it brings to mind that army, which, according to a pagan fiction, from the teeth of serpents sown in the earth, sprang up together, ready armed for battle, and destroyed each other.

But are these things so? Did God, indeed, at the beginning, bring into being, at the same time, a number of human creatures, independent of each other, and turn them uninstructed into the woods, to settle a civil polity by compact among themselves? We know he did not. He who “worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will,” or that law which his wisdom prescribes to his power; he who appointed a regular subordination among the celestial hierarchies; he who “made a law for the rain, and gave his decree to the sea, that the waters should not pass his commandment;” he who is the God of peace and order, provided for the establishment and continuation of these blessings among mankind, by ordaining, first in the case of

Adam, and then again in that of Noah, that the human race should spring from one common parent.

Unless, therefore, some other origination of mankind be discovered, all equality and independence are at an end. The state of nature was a state of subordination: since, from the beginning, some were born subject to others; and the power of the father, by whatever name it be called, must have been supreme at the first, when there was none superior to it.—“To fathers within their private families,” saith judicious Hooker, “nature hath given a supreme power; for which cause we see throughout the world, even from the foundation thereof, all men have ever been taken as lords and lawful kings, in their own houses.” And had children the power to choose for themselves, what could they wish for, beyond the care and protection of a parent?

The creation of one pair, the institution of marriage, and the relations flowing from it, do so evidently show subordination, at the beginning, to have been natural, and not founded on compact between peers, that two of the ablest advocates for a different hypothesis have, in fact, reduced the supposed compact at last to a *probable* or *tacit* consent of the children to be governed by their father. So that we may fairly look upon this point to be given up. Let us, therefore, go on to trace, as well as we can, the progress of society in the early ages of the world; to point out the manner in which a number of families became united under one civil polity, and governments arose, differing from each other, no less in form, than in extent.

As mankind multiplied, they necessarily found themselves obliged to separate and disperse; which they did accordingly, under their natural rulers, the chiefs of families and tribes, who, by reason of their longevity, saw themselves, in a course of years, at the head of a numerous train of descendants and dependants. By these means, the earth became gradually filled with *little* governments; and as there was land sufficient for them all, in this state they continued, till, through the workings of corrupted nature, disputes were engendered, which terminating in war, victory at last declared for one of the parties, and the other was obliged to submit. Thus the *larger* governments arose by conquest, first swallowed up the *lesser* into themselves, and then contended with, and overthrew each other.

In the tenth chapter of Genesis, we have an account of the families, tribes, or lesser governments, with which the earth was overspread by the progeny of the sons of Noah. And in the same chapter we read, that, very soon after, by means of Nimrod, a *mighty one*, a warrior, a conqueror, the kingdom, or larger government of Babel, began to rear its head, which, in process of time, under different names, became universal; till grown too great to support its own weight, it was subverted by the Persian, as the Persian was by the Grecian, and the Grecian by the Roman, out of which last were formed the empires, kingdoms, and states, at this day subsisting.

Thus it was, that the lesser governments were, from the beginning, founded in the *patria potestas*, and “multiplied as long as there was room enough, or they could agree together; till, upon dissensions arising, the stronger, or more fortunate, swallowed up the weaker: and those great ones, again breaking in pieces, dissolved into lesser dominions.”\* Power dropped from the hands of one, but was always seized by another, before it could descend to the people, who indeed often changed their governors, but were never left to rove at large, without any government at all. Compact had no place, unless either when the lesser states united, as the Greeks did under Agamemnon, against a common enemy, which was only for a time; or else, when several states united, to go and seek fresh settlements, they chose a head, with reserve of privileges to the leaders under him. As to those illegitimate forms of government called *aristocratic*, and *democratic*, they are, comparatively, of late standing, and were indeed founded on compact, though generally among peers in rebellion, who having broken off from their allegiance to their natural rulers, and thrown the public into convulsions, and being determined to admit no common superior, were obliged, by the necessity of their circumstances, to settle themselves, by compact, into a government, in which a certain mock equality of all was pretended, but a conjunct tyranny of a few was exercised. Orators, haranguing upon liberty, to get themselves a name among the populace, have extolled these forms, as the most accomplished and genuine of all. But if we consider, as an acute writer directs us to do, that “the utmost energy of the nervous

\* Mr. Locke.



style of Thucydides, and the great copiousness and expression of the Greek language seem to sink under the historian, when he attempts to describe the disorders, which arose from faction, throughout all the Grecian commonwealths;" that "Appian's history of the Roman civil wars contains the most frightful picture of massacres, proscriptions, and forfeitures, that ever was presented to the world;"\* if, at the same time, we recollect the confusion and desolation once occasioned in our own country, by the project of erecting a government upon the plan of those famous democracies, we shall find no temptation to exchange a regular and well constituted monarchy for a REPUBLIC, especially as we must be first thrown into that imaginary political chaos, falsely called a state of nature, before the fair creation can emerge. Like the Israelites of old, we must break off all that is precious and valuable, and cast it into the fire, that from thence may come out this boasted idol, at the feet of which kings and kingdoms are to fall down and worship.

But if the foregoing be a true representation of facts, it may be asked—How came men into that savage state, in which many nations have been, and are at present, and which, if it be not a state of nature, yet doth much resemble that which is described as such, and perhaps gave birth to the ideas that have been entertained concerning it, and the political systems erected upon the supposition of it?

In order satisfactorily to answer this question, it must be remembered, that after the confusion at Babel, and the apostacy of the nations from the worship of the true God to idolatry, the world was gradually peopled by colonies sent forth from places overstocked. These colonies would consist of a mixture of people, often the meanest and lowest, sometimes driven out by conquering enemies, destitute of necessaries, to seek for settlements in distant quarters of the globe. If they fixed in a colder latitude, which rendered the want of clothes and a variety of well prepared food more sensibly felt, and likewise in a place conveniently situated for traffick, they would employ all the understanding, of which they were masters, to contrive things first for use, and afterward for elegance and ornament. But as this was a work of ages; as some imperfect notices of their ruder times would be handed down to their more polite

\* Mr. Hume.

ones ; and as they had no writing to record events,—there must needs be a wide chasm in their history, between the desertion of their old settlements, and the completion of their new ones. So that when, in their civilized and polished state, they came, at their leisure, to look back and guess at their own rise and progress, they would be lost in the darkness of those times, which preceded their present improvements. They would then imagine a state of nature, in which all were savages, and all were equal ; they would fancy themselves to have been *Αυτοχθονες*, judge of other nations by their own, make the system universal, and suppose all government to have been founded on compact among peers, in that “ wild and disorderly state.” As their laws, though of late date, were the first *written* accounts of their civilization, they would conclude that, till then, there had been no law or civil polity in the world ; though, in every country, there is a *jus scriptum*, and a *jus non scriptum*, of which the latter is always the oldest, being coeval with the constitution, or even prior to it, having sometimes been brought from the place whence the colony came, and perhaps delivered down from the beginning.

In circumstances like these, we are not to be surprised, if we find the historians, philosophers, and poets, among the Greeks and Romans, believing civil government to have arisen at first by an agreement among independent savages, as some of them imagined, that the world itself was formed by a fortuitous concourse of independent atoms, floating up and down in an infinite void. In constructing these visionary systems, political and physical, they displayed their ingenuity ; and we can only lament their want of information with regard to what had happened in former ages, of which they had no means of obtaining more than was derived to them by an imperfect disjointed tradition, disguised in the dress of fable, and destitute of any authority to recommend and gain it credit. They erected the best fabric they could, with the materials in their hands, and it would be unreasonable to expect brick from artificers, to whom straw was not given. But in us, who have the scripture history before us, it would be something worse than unreasonable, to overlook the information with which that supplies us, and have recourse to romantic schemes, which owed their being to the want of it.

On the other hand, let us suppose a colony, upon its migration, to have settled itself in a warmer climate, where men would find little or no occasion for clothes, houses, or the preparation of food by fire; and where they were cut off from all communication with the rest of the world. In this situation, they would not concern themselves about the conveniencies, much less the elegancies of life. Naked, or nearly so, living upon the fruits of the earth, and such other provision as the chase, or the net would procure, and strangers, for want of commerce, to arts and learning, they must continue in the deepest intellectual poverty, retaining only some of those superstitious customs, and diabolical rites, derived from their idolatrous ancestors, and imported with them. And thus degenerating, as they must of necessity do, every day more and more, they would come at last into that deplorable state of ignorance and barbarism, in which some nations are indeed found at this day. But is this a state of *nature*? Was this the state in which the Lord of all things placed the noblest of sublunary beings, the heir of glory and immortality, when his own hands had formed and fashioned him, and he had breathed into him the breath of life? No, surely, it is a state the most *unnatural* in which rational creatures, made in the image of their Creator, can be conceived to exist? A state into which, through apostacy from revealed truth, and consequent loss of all knowledge, by the just judgment of God upon them, some nations were permitted to fall, and are suffered to continue, *in terrorem* to others. And does a master of reason, an enlightened philosopher, in an enlightened age, send us to learn the first principles of government from Floridans, Brasilians, and Cherokees, because it is said, that they have no kings, but choose leaders, as they want them in time of war? Though such is the force of primeval institution, such the necessity of government, and such the voice of nature concerning it, that even in America, upon its discovery, some nations, as the Mexicans and Peruvians, were found in the state of the *larger* governments which arose by conquest, while others, in the form of the *lesser*, were subject to the chiefs of their respective clans and tribes. Savages themselves cannot live in a state of absolute equality and independence. In civilized communities, a ship cannot be navigated, a regiment cannot march, a family cannot be holden together, without

a subordination established and preserved. And was all government once dissolved, and the world really reduced to that state, out of which civil polity is supposed to have originally sprung, it would be a scene of uproar and confusion, and a field of blood, till the day of the consummation of all things.

A long and uninterrupted enjoyment of blessings is apt to extinguish in us that gratitude toward the author of them, which it ought to cherish and invigorate; and justice is the less regarded, when she maketh these her awful processions through the land, preserving peace and tranquillity in our borders, because she maketh them periodically and constantly. Far different would be our sensations at such times, had sad experience ever taught us what it was to see government unhinged, to want the protection of regal power, and the due execution of laws, by those to whom that power is delegated, "for the punishment of evildoers, and the praise of them that do well." The course of nature often glides on unobserved, when there are no variations in it; and the sun himself shineth unnoticed, because he shineth every day. "Since the time that God did first proclaim the edicts of his law," says the excellent Hooker, "heaven and earth have hearkened unto his voice, and their labour hath been to do his will. But if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch, erected over our heads, should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and, by irregular volubility, turn themselves any way, as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now, as a giant, doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were, through a languishing faintness, begin to stand, and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, and her fruits pine away, as children at the withered breasts of their mother, no longer able to yield them relief; what would become of man himself, whom these things do all now serve;" and how would



he look back upon those benefits, for which, when they were daily poured upon him in boundless profusion, he forgot to be thankful?

While, therefore, we partake, in so eminent a degree, the benefits of civil polity, let us not be unmindful of our great Benefactor. Let these solemn occasions serve to remind us, that there is an intimate connexion between religion and government; that the latter flowed originally from the same divine source with the former, and was, at the beginning, the ordinance of the Most High; that the state of nature was a state of subordination, not one of equality and independence, in which mankind never did, nor ever can exist; that the civil magistrate is "the minister of God to us for good;" and that to the gracious Author of every other valuable gift we are indebted for all the comforts and conveniences of society, during our passage, through this turbulent scene, to those mansions, where, as violence is no more committed, punishment is no more deserved; where eternal justice hath fixed her throne, and is for ever employed in distributing rewards to her subjects, who have been tried, and found faithful.

## DISCOURSE XXV.

### THE PRODIGAL SON.

*It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.*—Luke xv. 32.

THESE words conclude the parable of the Prodigal Son. A parable, for its variety of incidents, and the affecting manner in which they are related, remarkably beautiful, even in the letter of it. A younger son, gay and thoughtless, as youth often is, grown weary of being in the house and under the direction of a kind and tender father, desires to have his fortune consigned over to him, that he may go out

into the world, and manage for himself. Having obtained his request, he immediately makes use of the so much wished for liberty and independency, quits the habitation of his father, and takes his journey into a far country. Here, falling into bad company and strong temptations, he found his good resolutions presently staggered; and his old principles not being firmly fixed, and having no support, soon gave way to a set of new ones, better adapted to the times and the fashion of the country he was now in. Loose practices were the necessary consequence of false principles; and as the paths of sin are not only slippery, but all upon the descent too, he fell from one wickedness to another, plunged into all manner of riot and debauchery, and spent the last farthing. To complete his misery, there arose at that time a mighty famine in the land where he was; and he was soon at a loss where to get a piece of bread. Nay, to so great extremity was he driven by the violence of the famine, that, having been forced to submit to the very abject employment of feeding swine, he tried in vain to satisfy the cravings of nature with the dry and empty husks that the swine did eat. These had nothing in them fit to nourish the human body. Hungry and thirsty, his soul fainted in him, and there was no man that took any thought or care about him. The affliction was sharp; but the case required it; and now it began to work the intended cure. For by this time the sense of his misery had, through God's grace, brought him to a sense of his folly, from which that misery flowed; and when he was starving at night in the fields with cold and hunger, he could not help thinking of the happy souls he had left behind him in his father's house, where there was joy, and comfort, and plenty of every thing. In that house he was once a beloved son; but his wickedness had been too great to suffer him to hope he should ever be owned there again in that capacity. Tribulation is the school of humility, and an excellent school it is; for by it the man whose pride and gaiety of heart were such that he could not bear to stay in the house where he was a son, became so very meek and submissive, that to be in that same house as an hired servant, was now the utmost of his wishes. Nay, he hardly could bring himself to hope that his father would take him in again, even as a servant. In fear and trembling therefore he arose, and returned to him

whose face he was yet afraid, though so desirous to see. But lo! the bowels of the good old man yearned after his lost child, and he was continually looking out for him; so that at his return, he saw him while he was yet a great way off; and with an heart overflowing with love and joy, ran forth to meet him, embraced him in his arms, fell upon his neck, and kissed him. He would hardly stay to hear his humiliation of himself and confession of his unworthiness, but ordered the servants instantly to produce the best robe, and put it upon him, and to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and to bring forth the fatted calf, and kill it, that they might eat and be merry. All this was accordingly done, and now there was nothing to be heard but music and melody, and the voice of joy and thankfulness, in that house. But the elder brother, who had lived with the father, and happened at this time to be abroad in the field about his business, coming home and drawing near to the house, was surprised with the noise of music and dancing; and calling one of the servants out, he asked what it meant. The servant told him, that his long-lost brother was come home again, and that his father had killed the fatted calf, because he had received him safe and sound. Upon this, instead of participating in the common joy, he suffered pride and envy to get possession of his heart; he was angry, and would not go in. Therefore came his father out, and entreated him; to whom he complained, that, having served him so long, without transgressing at any time his commandments, he had never had so much as a kid given him, that he might make merry with his friends; but as soon as this other son was come, who had devoured his living with harlots, the fatted calf had been killed for him. Son (says the good old man to him), thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine, so that thou mayest have a feast at any time, or rather indeed hast a continual feast; but surely, upon such an extraordinary occasion as this, it was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Such is the parable of the Prodigal Son, according to the letter. Let us now endeavour to discover the spirit and interpretation of this beautiful parable.

“A certain man had two sons.” This Father is God

himself, the father of both Jew and Gentile, represented here, as in many other places, under the figure of two sons. The Jew is considered in scripture as the elder; the Gentile as the younger. For thus the rejection of the Jew and the acceptance of the Gentile, were showed forth by the rejection of Cain and the acceptance of Abel; the rejection of Ishmael and the acceptance of Isaac; the rejection of Esau and the acceptance of Jacob. These two sons, Jew and Gentile, at the beginning, lived together in their father's house, that is, the church, which (as says St. Paul) is "the house of the living God." There, under their father's immediate protection, they partook alike of the divine promises and sacred services, and had all things common; and there was, for some time, no difference between them.

"But the younger son said unto his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; and he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, he gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and spent his substance with riotous living." In these words is described the departure of the Gentiles from God, who, having conferred his divine promises, and in them the riches of the kingdom of heaven, on all alike, is said to have "divided his living between his two sons." The elder, the Jew, continued with him in the church. This we know by the history of Abraham and his posterity, till the coming of Christ. But the younger, the Gentile, growing weary of the service of God, and fond of independency and the liberty of making his own religion, gathered together all the talents and abilities bestowed upon him, with the knowledge he had acquired from the divine revelations and institutions, "and took his journey into a far country;" in other words, he went out from the presence of God in his church, and in his heart departed far from the Lord. Whence we often find the Gentiles spoken of under the phrase, "Those that are AFAR OFF." Thus this poor silly prodigal became (as St. Paul styles him) "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." The promises and services carried off by him were applied to false objects; and he soon "wasted his substance," the riches of his understanding, "in riotous living," and devoured his estate, the means by which his spirit was to be supported, with



harlots; in a word, he fell into idolatry, which not only is itself spiritual fornication, but opened a door to all manner of lasciviousness, by introducing it even into the temples and services of the gods. For which reason St. Paul closely connects them in his account of this very transaction, the apostacy of the nations; "They changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image—WHEREFORE God also gave them up to uncleanness."—Rom. i. But let us proceed to consider the consequences of this behaviour.

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want."

Having forsaken God, and lost his grace and love, and at length all knowledge of him, he could find nothing elsewhere but that poverty, misery, and want, which the fall had brought upon the earth. This wretched state of the Gentile world is pictured to us by the lively and striking idea of a famine.—"There arose a mighty famine in that land," a mighty dearth and scarcity of divine knowledge, which is the bread of life to the soul; for "man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." A famine of this sort is thus described by the prophet Amos:—"Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." This was exactly the case of the Gentiles, when they had squandered away the riches of divine knowledge which they had received from their heavenly Father at the beginning. Then there arose a sad famine of the word of God, and they began to be in want of something that would satisfy the empty soul. Then their philosophers and seekers after wisdom ran to and fro, from one end of the earth to the other, to procure a little true religious knowledge; but it was not to be found. And the famine was over all the face of the Gentile world, and the land fainted by reason of the famine. But as there was no true bread of life to be procured, the soul must endeavour to satisfy itself with something. Accordingly, we read of our young prodigal, that,—

"He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would

fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him."

"No man (says Christ) can serve two masters." But one he must serve. And if he quits the service of God, he soon becomes a slave to the devil. This was the case of the Gentile prodigal. When he had deserted the service of his heavenly Father, God Almighty, the next thing we hear of him is, that he had joined himself to another master, namely, to him who, since he has been cast out of heaven, walks up and down in the earth, seeking those who have left their old Master and Father, to hire them into his service. The prodigal was in that condition; and accordingly Satan took possession of him. For thus St. Paul tells the Ephesians, that before their conversion, "they walked according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." And the design of the gospel is elsewhere said to be, to "turn the Gentiles from the power of Satan to God." While they were Gentiles, therefore, they were under "the power of Satan." Now the employment which the grand adversary of man's happiness finds for him, when once engaged in his service, is this:—He sends him into proper scenes of sin and wickedness, vanity and folly, there to gratify the desires of corrupt nature, enslaving him by this means to his own brutish lusts and passions. This is most exactly described in the parable, by the circumstance of his being "sent into his master's fields to feed swine;" to which ravenous and unclean animals, the insatiable, earthly lusts of concupiscence are, with great propriety, resembled in holy scripture. The misery of the employment is, that these lusts are never to be satisfied. A truth to which the heart of every sinner will bear a sad testimony. Besides, God made the soul of man for himself, and therefore bequeathed it unquietness, till possessed of its Maker. Vain then is the employment of those, who seek to procure the happiness of the soul, by indulging the appetites of the body. Men are daily inventing new schemes to effect it, till diversion is grown a science, and amusement become a toil. But if we ask them, they will one and all tell us, it is not yet effected. Something, to a man possessed of all that earth can give him—something is still wanting. O fools and slow of heart to believe what the prophets and the apostles have spoken! The comforts of religion are wanting, and these they will

not look after; but still, copying the example of their ancestor, the poor Gentile prodigal, they would "fain fill their bellies with the husks which the swine do eat;" they are endeavouring to nourish their immortal spirits with the empty unsatisfying things of this corruptible world, which are calculated for the bodily appetites only. But let all who have followed this prodigal in his departure from his Father, come hither, and hearken, and he will tell them what God hath done for his soul, and call them to follow the noble example he has set them in his return, and reconciliation.

And here, let us observe with attention, a complete description of the process of true repentance and justification in the Gentiles, and all who are sinners, like them. The violence of the famine had brought the wretched prodigal to the last stage of distress. He had tried in vain to satisfy himself with "that which was not bread. Hungry and thirsty, his soul fainted in him, and he drew near to the gates of death." But now the grace of God, which leadeth to repentance, began to work upon him. It had been ready to do so all along; but as it is said of Christ, that he "could do no mighty works in some places, because of men's unbelief," so his grace does not work upon men's minds, when they are determined not to suffer it. While the prodigal's heart was in the flutter, and hurry, and dissipation of pleasure and extravagance, no mighty works of salvation could be wrought in it. But when it was humbled by affliction, and broken with continual tribulation, it became a proper subject for the operations of divine grace. Accordingly, the good Spirit of God immediately began with his preventing favour, and led him step by step, till his repentance and reconciliation were completed.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger? I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

A sense of sin is the beginning of repentance, and a sense of misery begets a sense of sin. The Gentiles (and the case is the same with sinners of all ages) could not but feel the poverty and wretchedness into which they had fallen. And

when a man feels himself miserable, it is but natural for him to consider how he came to be so. The cause appeared plain enough to the Gentile, when enlightened at first by the scriptures of the Old Testament, dispersed in the Septuagint version, and then by the gospel preached through all nations. Aided in his meditations by these helps, he quickly traced all his misfortunes up to the fountain head, which was his leaving the church, the house of the living God, his heavenly Father. Now he began thoroughly to comprehend the misery of his state, and to envy the happiness of those who had continued in their father's house, and served him day and night in his temple. They were not confounded in the perilous time, and in the days of dearth they had enough, and to spare. They feasted evermore at the table of their heavenly Father, and found the light of his countenance to be life, and his favour and grace as a cloud of the latter rain; while *his* soul was starving for lack of knowledge and truth, and frozen for want of charity.—“How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with hunger?” He was now (as it is finely expressed) “come to himself,” and to a remembrance of his true condition and interest. From the hour he left his father's house to this moment, he had been in a dream, and found himself just awaked out of what may be called a deep sleep, in the language of St. Paul, who thus addresses a sinner, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise.” Accordingly, being now awake, he determined instantly to *arise*, and tread back the steps by which he had departed from his father; to make a frank and full confession to him of his past sins; to acknowledge himself utterly unworthy of any favour at his hands; and to declare his readiness to submit to any penance, to live in any state of humiliation, that his father should be pleased to impose; only begging, at any rate, to be admitted into the church, to serve him again. This resolution he had no sooner formed, but he made haste, and prolonged not the time to put it in practice. He arose, returned to his father, and said unto him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee; and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.” Which words, as put in the mouth of the prodigal Gentile, returning at the preaching of the gospel, to the church of God, the house of his heavenly Father, may, it is appre-



hended, be thus paraphrased :—“ Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men : I acknowledge and bewail my manifold sins and wickedness, which I from time to time, from the first hour of my departure, most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty, provoking most justly, thy wrath and indignation against me. I do earnestly repent, and am heartily sorry for these my misdoings ; the remembrance of them is grievous unto me ; the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me, most merciful Father. For thy Son my Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive me what is past, and grant that I may ever hereafter serve, and please thee in newness of life, to the honour and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is the confession which the church enjoins us poor prodigal sinners of the Gentiles to make, as often as we return from feeding upon *husks* in the world, to eat the bread of life in our *Father's house*. And a noble comment it is upon the short but full confession of the prodigal in the parable. Let us now hear, what was the reception this returning penitent met with, and, consequently, what reception we shall meet with, when we return like him.

“ But while he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him ;” and while he was confessing his sinfulness and unworthiness, “ he said to the servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet ; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”

Here let all sinners (and sinners we all are) behold the loving kindness of our heavenly Father to those who truly repent and turn to him, as it was displayed toward the Gentiles, upon their conversion. The bowels of his mercy yearned over them in their lost estate ; and he longed for their return, as a father for that of his child gone from him. When the time of life was come, he saw them while they were yet afar off, and had compassion on them, and ran forth to meet them by the preaching of the apostles, and embraced them in the arms of his mercy, and gave them the sure pledge and token of reconciliation and love, by the word and spirit of

his mouth. No sooner did he behold them making their humble confession to him, meekly kneeling upon their knees, but he ordered his ministers to bring forth from the wardrobe of heaven the best robe, the robe of righteousness, and garment of salvation; that fine white linen, spotless and bright as the sun, which is the righteousness of saints, the wedding garment of the church of the redeemed. These robes the Father commanded the ministers of his sanctuary to bring forth, and put them on the new converts, by investing them in baptism with all the righteousness, merits, and graces of the Lord Jesus Christ; giving them, at the same time, a lively impression of his Spirit, which is the seal of adoption, a pledge of the inheritance in heaven, an earnest of the eternal promises, a token of their espousals to the Lamb of God; signified in the parable, by "putting a ring on his hand." Bestowing on them such graces and assistances as might enable them to walk in the way of his commandments, and in the practice of good works; to secure themselves from the thorns of worldly cares, and the mire of earthly pleasures; and to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy, the devil and his temptations; all which is described by "putting shoes upon his feet." And, lastly, the ministers were to prepare the Christian sacrifice, on which the now accepted Gentiles were to feast at the table of their heavenly Father, singing and making melody to the Lord, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven.—"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord all the earth. Sing unto the Lord; bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day. He hath remembered his mercy and truth; his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Therefore make a joyful noise unto the Lord all the earth, make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord the king." Such was the joy, at the reception of the returning prodigal, because he who had been dead in sin, was alive to righteousness; and he who had been lost to the church for ages and generations, was found and restored to it. Well, surely, might they "begin to be merry." Who would not be merry with them? Who could have any objec-

tion to their being so? Alas! there is one that never would be merry with them, and to this day cannot bear that they should be so, but gnashes his teeth, and consumes away with envy. And that is our elder brother the Jew, whose unreasonable behaviour upon this occasion, with the Father's just reproof to him, is represented to us in the concluding part of the parable.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came, and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant! And he said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed for him the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out, and entreated him. And he answering, said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

The Jews hearing the sound of the gospel, and the voice of joy and rejoicing in the church, were continually "calling to the servants" of God, the apostles and first preachers of the word, and "asking what these things meant?" and were always answered, as in the parable, that "their brother was come;" that God had granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life; that *they* were now come into the church; and the one great sacrifice was offered for them, and for all men. And are not the words of the parable fulfilled, to this day?—"They are angry, and will not come in." No, not though their Father, God Almighty, time after time, came out, and entreated them by the voice of his Son, by the preaching of his apostles, by the allurements of his mercies, and by the terror of his judgments. Ah, all would not do. Their Father they rebelled against, his Son they crucified, his apostles they persecuted, his mercies they forgot, and his judgments they defied. Seventeen hundred years are past; still, still "they are angry, and will not come in!"

Their plea is, as represented in the parable, that they served God many years; that they never transgressed at any time his commandment; that God had not showed them sufficient marks of his favour; but treated this worthless prodigal Gentile better than he had treated them. A plea, every article of which is full of pride, falsehood, and envy. Pride is at the bottom of all. They loved to justify themselves by the works of the law, as St. Paul says of them;—"Going about to establish their own righteousness, by the works of the law, they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ." Accordingly, their plea runs altogether in the boasting strain. First,—*"They had served God many years."* Not to mention *how* they had served him, it was God that enabled them both to will, and to do; so that there was no room for boasting. Secondly,—*"They had never at any time transgressed his commandment;"* in other words, they thanked God they were not as other men were, adulterers, fornicators, extortioners, unjust, or even as this prodigal Gentile. Now, supposing all this to be true, they were still unprofitable servants; they had done only that which it was their duty to do. But St. Stephen convinced them that they were infamous transgressors, having indeed received the law, but not kept it; so that what they reckoned matter of glorying, was, in reality, the sentence of their condemnation. In this part of their plea, therefore, there is a mixture of pride and falsehood. Thirdly,—*"God had not showed them sufficient marks of his favour."* This was false; for he was continually showering his benefits upon them; and for many, many years, their fleece had the dew, when all the rest of the ground was dry. Fourthly,—*"He treated the Gentiles better than he had treated them."* This was false again, as well as envious; for if they would have come in, they might have partaken with the Gentiles in the feast and the joy, and been for ever with them in the church; nor would the accession of the nations have diminished ought from them, but rather it would have added an infinite increase of joy and pleasure to them, had the love of God and of their brother been in their hearts; as the light of the sun is not lessened, but increased, by being reflected at once from all the innumerable waves of the wide ocean. Indeed, the father in the parable, ever tender, and loving, and willing to try



every way to bring them in, does not object their transgressions to them, but answers upon their state of the case; that, even supposing they had served and obeyed him, as they said they had, they could never complain of wanting marks of his favour, seeing they had "ever been in his house," the church, with him, as his children, and "all that he had was theirs: for to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: theirs were the fathers: and of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." Why, therefore, should they be angry, because the poor Gentiles were suffered to partake of these good things, when they had qualified themselves for it by repentance and faith? And what sort of materials must their hearts be made of, when they could not acquiesce in that tender, merciful, and loving declaration of their heavenly Father—"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again: was lost, and is found."

Beholding, therefore, the sad consequences of departing from our Father's house, let us take up the resolution of the holy psalmist:—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Let us think that we hear our blessed Master, astonished, as it were, to see himself forsaken by so many of his disciples, saying unto us, as once he did to the twelve—"Will ye also go away?" And let us answer with one accord, as they did by the mouth of St. Peter,—"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." But what was it that seduced the prodigal Gentile to leave so gracious a Father, and to quit the house where his glory dwelt? What, but an impatience of restraint, a fond desire of independency, and of being wise above what is written? Warned, therefore, by his fate, let us love the discipline that withholds us from sin; let us glory (if we must glory) in that dependency on our Maker, and those whom his providence has set over us, by which alone, after all, the church and the world are supported and preserved: and let us at last learn to believe in God, and rest assured, upon his word, that the *wisdom* of this world is as unsatisfactory as its riches, honours, and pleasures; and that, amidst the greatest abundance of them all, "a mighty famine will arise" in the soul, for want of more substantial food, which, if it be not remedied in this life, by "seeking meat from God,"

will continue to torment, in those regions of sorrow, where hunger and despair are coeternal.

Let the sinner, whom the chastising hand of God has brought to himself; whose eyes have been opened by affliction, to behold his real state and condition; who has felt the truth which he refused to believe, that the world is vanity, and sin folly; let such an one listen to the admonitions of conscience, and cherish the first dawnings of divine grace in his heart; that so the Sun of Righteousness, there arising, may disperse every cloud, and cause every shadow to fly away; till having, by slow and imperceptible degrees, ascended the heights of the sky, he stands fixed in his meridian, diffusing on all beneath him the perfect day. For, however darkness may at present cover the transgressor, and gross darkness overwhelm his soul, as once it did the Gentile world, yet let him know, to his great and endless comfort, that, upon his sincere repentance, the Lord shall arise likewise upon him, and his glory shall be seen upon him. Let him only follow the example of the returning prodigal, and he shall not fail of *his* reward, even reconciliation, and peace, and love, and joy, and rejoicing, in the house of his heavenly Father.

Lastly.—Let us of the nations, whom undeserved mercy has numbered amongst the children of God, let us beware that we copy not after the pattern of the Jew, or envy him the glory of his future conversion and restoration. Rather let us endeavour, to the utmost, to forward so happy an event. And since of all human means, that of showing him the dispensations of Jesus, whom his wicked hands crucified, in his own scriptures of the Old Testament, is the most likely to contribute toward the blessed work, let this be an additional motive to us to study day and night the true import of those lively oracles. But since such a conversion as this must be most eminently the work of the Almighty, let not our most fervent prayers be ever wanting to him, that he would now at length look down from heaven upon his ancient people; that he would take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of his word, and so fetch them home to his flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites. May it be our happy lot, by our prayers and labours, to hasten the coming of that glorious day (though our eyes may not behold it),

when the elder brother shall feel the just reproof of his Father piercing his inmost soul, and be prevailed upon to lay aside his pride, envy, and obstinacy; when the fulness of the Gentiles shall meet with the conversion of the Jews, and the two brothers, reconciled to their Father, and to each other, by the blood of Jesus, shall, with united hearts and voices, praise the Lord for his goodness, having each in his turn experienced, that his mercy endureth for ever.

## DISCOURSE XXVI.

## KNOWLEDGE AND CHARITY.

*Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.*—1 Cor. viii. 1.

IN a place dedicated to the advancement of science, and before an audience of persons set apart for that purpose, it might seem an undertaking no less improper than invidious, to point out its ill effects, had not the great Doctor of the Gentiles authorized such a proceeding, and the present pious and judicious institution\* demanded it at our hands. No person ever entertained an higher idea of true wisdom than St. Paul, who has employed the most exalted strains of divine oratory, to set forth the excellency of knowledge and understanding. But yet the holy apostle saw, that learning makes not the man of God perfect; that something may still be wanting in him, who is at the top of intellectual attainments; and that the complete scholar may fall short, at last, of the kingdom of heaven. He saw that spiritual, like bodily wealth, unless used for the benefit of others,

\* A benefaction left by Mr. Masters, for a sermon to be preached at this season, and another immediately before Lent, on certain texts by him selected, tending to inculcate the duty of Christian *Humility*, as opposed to the pride of science, and to point out the true nature and end of the *ministerial office*.

would prove no blessing to its owner, serving only to hasten his fall, and increase his condemnation. And, therefore, that the wise man might not glory in his wisdom, but sink into himself by humility, as he rises above others in understanding, remembering always the account he must make, proportionable to the talents delivered, the apostle determines that, not only human learning, but the knowledge of all prophecies and mysteries; that is, of all the dispensations of God, and every truth in the scriptures, and that knowledge formed into an orthodox faith, animated by a lively hope, will profit a man nothing, if charity, or divine love, be not superadded, which, like the vital heat in the human frame, may disperse and actuate all to the edification of the body.

This is the great argument of his epistle to the Corinthians; a people, in whom their reputation for polite literature, and a distinguished taste, had produced not a little conceit of themselves and their endowments. This temper and disposition they most unhappily brought with them into the church, where, not being mortified, as it ought to have been, by the Spirit of the meek and humble Jesus, it began to display itself in religious, as it had before done in secular learning. The object was changed, but the passions were the same; and Christ himself was made the occasion of pride, envy, and contention, among those, who all alike professed themselves to be his disciples. The new converts were soon divided into little parties, struggling for the pre-eminence of their respective leaders, like so many sects of philosophers, rather than zealous for the glory of their Lord, as members of his one universal church. St. Paul does not accuse them of ignorance. On the contrary, he bears them witness, that they were "enriched with all knowledge, and came behind in no gift;" but complains, notwithstanding, that they were still carnal; they did not "all speak the same thing," as brethren of one family, and fellow members of the same body should do, but formed themselves into separate factions and schisms; insomuch, that he feared, lest, in contending for knowledge, charity should have been pulled in pieces of them, while all sought to excel for the sake of excelling, and not to the edifying of the church; all regarded their own glory, not the advantage of their brethren, whom they cared not how much they



offended, so they had but an opportunity of manifesting their own superiority.

A remarkable instance of this presented itself in the case of meat offered to an idol, concerning which the apostle tells them, "they had knowledge;" they knew "that an idol was nothing," and that therefore they might as well eat meat so offered, as any other, provided it was not brought to them as such, and made a test of their faith. But then, he observes, there was not in every man that degree of knowledge. There were some who, through infirmity and over-scrupulousness, could not so eat, without considering themselves as partakers of an idol sacrifice. The danger therefore was, lest such, emboldened by the example of a brother better established in faith, should be led to sin against their own consciences, and so, through the other's greater knowledge, a weak brother should perish, for whom Christ died, no less than for him that was stronger. Knowledge, thus used to the destruction of others, could never further the salvation of its possessor. And therefore St. Paul declares, that if the case were to be pushed even to the utmost, charity should make him waive all the privileges of his knowledge, for the edification of his brother.—"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

Upon this occasion it is, that he advances the general assertion in the text, which resolves itself into these two propositions:—

I. That knowledge without charity endeth in pride, and consequently in the destruction of him that hath it. "Knowledge puffeth up."

II. That charity directeth it to its proper end, the edification of the church. "Charity edifieth."

I. Knowledge without charity endeth in pride: it *puffeth up*, saith the apostle; it produceth an inflation in the mind, which, like a tumour in the body, carries the appearance of solidity, but has in reality nothing within, and only indicates a distempered habit. And, indeed, knowledge, as well as faith, if it be alone, is vain—it is dead. For all knowledge is given as a means to some end. The means, abstracted from their end, cease to be means, and answer no purpose whatsoever. The end of knowledge is action.—"If ye

know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”\* Every article of the creed involves in it a correspondent duty, and it is practice alone that gives life to faith, and realizes knowledge. What is true of human wisdom, with regard to things temporal, is as true of divine, with relation to things spiritual;—“Through wisdom is an house builded, and by understanding it is established, and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong, yea a man of knowledge increaseth strength; and by a man of understanding and knowledge the state of a land shall be prolonged.” The science that terminates where it begins, in the intellect, what availeth it? Or what profit is there in the learning, which promoteth not, in any measure, the interest either of the church or the state, of which its proprietor is a member!—“The manifestation of the Spirit (as that Spirit himself testifies) is given to every man to PROFIT withal.”† Otherwise it is of no effect, and the man becomes, as St. Jude finely describes such a character, like “a cloud without water,” raised aloft, as it should seem by its appearance, for the benefit of those beneath it; but how wretchedly are they disappointed! It sails along before the wind, proudly swelling in the sufficiency of its own emptiness, instead of dropping fatness and plenty on the lands over which it passes.—“Knowledge puffeth up.” And that this will always be the effect of it, where charity is wanting, we may fairly conclude from hence, that it always has been so—as shall be evinced by an induction of particulars.

But before we consider the instances of this truth, which have happened upon earth, we must ascend into heaven; and if the lustre of the object be not too strong for our organs, there view the glories that once encircled Lucifer, the son of the morning, the bright leader of the armies above, first, as in command, so in the greatness of his knowledge. What the prophet Ezekiel says of the prince of Tyre, seems primarily applicable to him.—“He sealed up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. He was perfect in his ways from the day that he was created, till iniquity was found in him.”‡ Confined not, like man, within the bounds of a material creation, or limited to ideas framed by analogy from sense, he beheld, without a glass,

\* John xiii. 17.

† 1 Cor. xii. 7.

‡ Ezek. xxviii. 12.

the wonders of the kingdom of heaven, and saw, face to face, the eternal power and godhead of him who made him. He saw, he knew; but he loved not.—“His heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness.” Conceit of his own excellency made him disdain the thought of man, in the person of the Messiah, being exalted over him; and he became, from the beginning, an opposer of the gracious counsel of infinite love to redeem the human race. The promulgation of this counsel before the world is assigned, by some divines, as the time of the angels’ fall; that being most probably the ground of the war begun in heaven against the head, and since carried on upon earth against the members.\* But however this be, certain it is, that through pride he fell. A proof, to the learned of all ages, that knowledge, without charity, will turn a good angel into an evil one; an admonition to them, not to expect that that alone should put man in possession of heaven, which, because it was alone, cast Lucifer himself out of it.

Yet this has all along been the fatal mistake, and the tree of knowledge still proved the occasion of a fall. Next to the majesty of Lucifer, at the head of the angelic legions, was the glory of Adam, the lord of this lower world, in Paradise. Formed in the image of his Maker, to have dominion over the creation, he was replenished, for that purpose, with the treasures of wisdom from above; and the magnificence of his palace, great as it was, bore no proportion to the riches of his understanding. He was in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was his covering; the sardius, topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold.”† He had a perfect knowledge of the nature, use, properties, and operations of the creatures, expressed in the names imposed by him. Nor stayed his wisdom here; but in the things that were made, he beheld reflected, as in a faithful mirror, the invisible things of God, who had taught him so to do. With him he conversed frequently, as a man with his friend, in the holy sanctuary of Eden; that happy seat of instruction, contemplation, and devotion, framed, after the example of

\* See Mr. Lesly’s “History of Sin and Heresy,” in the first volume of his “Theological Works.”

† Ezek. xxviii. 13.

heavenly things, like the tabernacle, the temple, and the church, which have, since the fall, supplied, and are to supply, its place in the world, till all shall be fully restored at the resurrection of the just. There lived our first parent a life which we are now little able to conceive; a life not much short of angelic perfection, antedating by holiness, in the earthly copy, the felicity reserved for him in the heavenly original. But man, though placed by God in this state of honour, did not continue in it. Knowledge was the temptation; and, even in Paradise, it proved but too successful. It wrought destruction, we find, by pride.—“The serpent, says Eve, beguiled me;” or, as it is in the original, *elated, puffed me up*.<sup>\*</sup> He persuaded her, it was not as God had said; she must know better. Revelation was an imposition upon the rights and liberties of the human understanding, and the command evidently contrary to the nature and reason of things; for “she saw the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and good for food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise.” Wisdom was to be acquired by a proper exertion of her faculties, and knowledge to be attained, without being obliged for it to the revelation of God. Thus was she deluded into scepticism under the notion of a *free inquiry*, and induced to renounce God in heaven, as her seducer had done before her, upon the principles of *the first philosophy*; hereby furnishing us with another sad proof, that knowledge, without charity, endeth in pride, and the destruction of the person who is possessed of it.

Were we to consider the several apostacies of mankind, after their restoration by the promise of a Redeemer, and the establishment of the church upon that promise, it might perhaps appear, that all the fruits of error and vice have sprung from the same root of bitterness. But as St. Paul, concluding all under sin, has divided the world into Jew and Gentile, it may suffice to take a cursory view of each.

To begin with the Gentiles, of whose fall the apostle gives this account.—“When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”<sup>\*</sup> Lack of knowledge, therefore, was not their original fault; “they knew God;” for that knowledge was universal in

\* דַּשִׁיאֲנִי.

† Rom. i. 21.



the family of Noah; and, though depraved, it could not be quite extinguished for many generations. But knowledge in the understanding, for want of charity in the heart, did not operate to a holy obedience;—"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." The truth, held or detained in unrighteousness, and imprisoned in an unholy conscience, passed not from their minds into their actions, that God might be glorified thereby, and some return made to him (for such he is pleased to esteem it), by the gratitude of his creatures. Instead of this, they were filled with fantastic dreams of their own perfection, which put them upon disputing with each other for place and precedence in knowledge.—"They became vain in their imaginations, *ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς*, their altercating reasonings." They wrangled upon every subject, till at length the most knowing among them gave up all for lost. Their learning consisted in being able to recount the various errors of preceding philosophers; and all that wisdom could do, was to deny the existence of truth. Thus it was, that "their foolish heart was darkened." The light which they had abused shone no more; the Sun of Revelation set, by their departure from it; the knowledge transmitted by tradition gradually died away like the twilight, and a long night of darkness and blindness of heart succeeded. The world, by wisdom, and the efforts of its own reason, knew God no more. Wisdom, indeed, was what the philosophers still continued to profess; but "professing to be wise, they became FOOLS;" and all may profit by their experience, which confirms the truth of the apostolical assertion in the text, that "knowledge puffeth up."

Let us now turn our eyes toward the Jew. Behold him, the son of Abraham, and heir of the promises, invested with the privileges of God's chosen, "having the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law," which he not only studies, but carries about, as a perpetual monitor, upon the borders of his garments, zealous for it, even to madness. Yet behold him become an outcast of heaven and earth, his law abrogated, his city burnt to ashes, himself a fugitive and a vagabond, without king, priest, prophet, temple, or habitation, a by-word and an hissing among all the nations of the earth. Who is not curious to inquire into the cause of such astonishing misery, such unprecedented calamities?

The cause is this—Knowledge puffed him up; his privileges became an occasion of boasting himself against his brethren, and envy eat out his charity.—“Going about to establish his own righteousness,” upon the strength of his own wisdom, he rejected the Lord his righteousness, and nailed him, who is the source of wisdom, to the cross, persecuting to the death all who offered to preach that righteousness, and teach that wisdom, to a sinful and ignorant world.

When the distinction of Jew and Gentile ceased, and one church (for that reason called *Catholic*) comprehended within its pale the believers of both denominations, knowledge puffed men up into heretics and schismatics. Pride made them rather choose to see themselves exalted at the head of a faction, than the church edified by their labours in an inferior station. This was the case in the church of Corinth, and has been the cause of every heresy and schism since. Novices, and persons whose heads are filled with religious notions, while their hearts and affections are not yet subdued by charity, are apt to fancy themselves formed for something great and extraordinary. They think it matter of general lamentation, that talents like their’s should be buried in obscurity. And, therefore, since they cannot preside *in* the church, they are determined to preside *out* of it.

These instances, it is presumed, are sufficient to evince, that “knowledge puffeth up;” knowledge, I mean, without charity; for had *that* accompanied it, all these things had never happened. Charity had kept Lucifer shining in his station, and rejoicing in the salvation of the human race. Charity had prevented the transgression and fall of man. Charity had employed the knowledge of the Gentile in glorifying God who gave it, and that of the Jew in promoting the kingdom of the Messiah, and the conversion of his brethren; and charity, among the members of Christ’s body, had preserved it in peace and unity. But to show more at large that it is charity which directeth knowledge to its right end, the edification of the church was the—

*IId.* Thing proposed. And this will be best done, by setting before you some instances, the reverse of the foregoing.

If, therefore, we ascend a second time into heaven, we shall find that the principle which opposed and triumphed over the knowledge of Lucifer, inflated by pride, was the

wisdom of God actuated by love. Praise and glory are due from man to all the divine attributes, for all were concerned in effecting his redemption. Wisdom contrived, and power executed; but love set all to work, love perfected and crowned the whole.—“The Lord is a God of knowledge;” but it was love which communicated that knowledge to mankind; which made the eternal wisdom to “rejoice in the habitable part of the earth, and delight to be with the sons of men.” He is a God of power; but that could only terrify us, till love employed it against our enemies. For which reason, when the psalmist singeth, “Great is our Lord, and great is his power, yea, and his wisdom is infinite;” he crowneth all by adding;—“The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works.” Pride would have used knowledge to the aggrandizing itself at the expense of others; but love turned it to the advancement of others, by humiliation of itself. The accuser of man was cast down; and man, in the person of the Messiah, exalted to an union with God. The knowledge, which terminated in itself, sunk into the lowest hell; while that, which sought the good of others, took its seat at the right hand of the Most High. The knowledge of Satan puffed him up, to the destruction of himself and his adherents; the love of God built up the church of the redeemed, unto salvation and glory everlasting.

To reverse the sad effects of a vain thirst after knowledge in our first parent, divine love became incarnate, and appeared upon earth in a bodily shape, in the form and fashion of a man.—“That which was from the beginning the disciples heard, they saw with their eyes, and their hands handled the Word of life.” All that he did, and all that he suffered, he did and suffered, because he loved us, for the good of his church. Not for his own advantage, but for us men, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven; and because he had taken upon him to deliver man, therefore he did not abhor the virgin’s womb. For the uncircumcision of our hearts he underwent circumcision; and to wash away our pollutions, he was baptized. Because man, by the temptation of knowledge, was seduced to infidelity and disobedience, he encountered and overcame the tempter by the word of God, and by love keeping the commandments. Jehovah, by his prophet Isaiah, had foretold

of him, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." The end of his knowledge was to be the justification of his chosen. And the promise was fulfilled. For, having "increased in wisdom, he went about doing good." His learning produced not a morose self-complacency, but a lovely affability, and a desire to teach others the glad tidings of joy. The treasures of wisdom and knowledge were not suffered to rust and canker, locked up from the public by a supercilious reservedness, but out of them he continually dispersed abroad, and gave to the poor in spirit. Of those who came to him, he rejected none, and went to those who came not. The sun at its rising found the good shepherd engaged in the care of his flock, and after it was set he did not forget them; but spent his nights in praying for those whom his days were employed in teaching. If his wisdom instructed the ignorant, and counselled the doubtful, his power afforded relief to the broken in heart, and diseased in body, forgiving all their sins, and healing all their infirmities. His unwearied diligence in acting can only be equalled by his invincible patience in suffering. Behold him despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Behold him without guile, condemned for an impostor; without sin, sustaining the punishment due to all the sin that ever was committed. He was wounded, but it was for our transgressions; he was bruised, but our iniquities bruised him. He carried our sorrows, because he bore our sins, in his own body on the tree. There love regained what pride had lost, and the wound made in our nature by the fruit of the tree of knowledge, was healed by the leaves of the tree of life. The gates of Paradise were again unbarred, and the kingdom of heaven opened to all believers.

To combat the vain wisdom of the Greek, and the self-justifying arrogance of the Jew, the apostles were sent forth.—"The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those who published it." The Philistine held not David in greater contempt, than was poured upon them by the scribe and the disputer of this world. But they went to the attack, as David did, "in the name of the Lord of hosts;" and therefore the spear and the shield were of no account against them. God was with them, no less than with Israel before Jericho. Again the trumpet sounded, the walls again



fell flat. The strong holds of false knowledge could not stand before the gospel, and human imagination was soon captivated to the obedience of Christ. Blasted by the lightning of inspired eloquence, the arm of false philosophy withered, and lost all its hold on the minds of men. Then kings with their armies did flee, and were discomfited. They were assembled against the church, as clouds, in black and dark array, portending her utter destruction; but at God's rebuke they fled; at the voice of his word, more powerful than the thunder in the heavens, they passed by together. They saw the effects of it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away. They acted the parts assigned them for a time, and then disappeared from the stage for ever. The Roman empire wondered to see itself Christian; to see the cross exalted in triumph over the globe, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. But what was it that gained this victory over the pride of earth and hell? What, but the same all-suffering, and, therefore, all-subduing charity, which taught the disciples of a crucified Jesus, after his example, to endure all things for the salvation of their brethren? Inspired with that love, they counted all things, which the world could give them, but loss, that they might win souls to Christ. They renounced all riches, but the riches of grace; they sought no pleasure, but that of doing their duty; and thought it honour sufficient to serve God. Labour, with persecution, they chose for their portion on earth; and looked for their advancement, with their Master, in the kingdom of heaven. The lamp, kindled in their hearts by the celestial fire of charity, never went out; the many waters of affliction could not quench it, neither could the floods of persecution drown it: and when the fury of the oppressor broke the earthen vessel that contained it, then was their victory, like that of Gideon, complete.

If, in the last place, we view the unity of the primitive church, as opposed to the sad divisions and distractions since produced by heresy and schism, it will appear, that charity built up that solid and durable edifice, so different from the airy fantastic structures of men, puffed up in their fleshly minds. As, at the formation of the church, the Spirit descended upon the disciples, when "they were all with one accord in one place," so, in like manner, after

more were added to them, it is remarked, for our instruction, that "the multitude of the believers were of one heart and one mind." The spirit of unity knit all the members together, insomuch, that if one member suffered, the rest sympathized with it, and the honour of one was the glory of all. Each had its distinct office in a due subordination, but all conspired to preserve and support the body, to which all were necessary. And thus they "grew up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, made increase of the body to the edifying itself in love."

Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses to the truth of both the propositions contained in the text, all the inhabitants of heaven, and the generations of men, and the spirits in the infernal prison, being engaged on the side of one or other of them, what remains, but that we endeavour to escape the punishment, by avoiding the crime of those who bear a mournful testimony to the truth of the former; and that we aspire after the reward, by copying the example of those who joyfully attest the certainty of the latter. It is our happiness to live in an university, endowed by the liberality of founders and benefactors, for our improvement in knowledge. As such she has long flourished, and her renown has gone forth into all lands. Long may she so flourish, even to the years of many generations, and lift up her sacred towers, as long as the sun and the moon shall endure, above all her enemies round about: never reduced to the necessity of subsisting upon her former reputation, but still reaping a fresh harvest from the learning of her children. Upon them all eyes are turned. The advantages they enjoy of devotion, solitude, leisure, and a mutual intercourse of study—advantages extolled and envied by all, but such as have neglected to use them—loudly call upon them to be ever vigilant, and most exceedingly zealous for the interest and honour of their common parent; to see that she decline not with a declining world, nor become infected with the corrupt and erroneous principles of a licentious and ungodly age; but that she follow after such a knowledge as may profit, and use that knowledge aright unto edification. For if even the know-

ledge that can save, works destruction, unless brought into action by charity, what shall we say, in the day when we are judged, should we be found to have laboured after a knowledge that cannot save? Our founders (let it never be forgotten) were the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the friends of mankind; and if ever the glory of the one, and the good of the other, directed the actions of any men, they certainly were the motives of planting these illustrious seminaries of truth and piety. Let the knowledge that tends to promote this blessed end, such a knowledge as charity may employ to the use of edifying, be therefore the grand subject of all our studies, and the daily entertainment of our most serious thoughts. This wisdom is the principal thing, therefore let us get it; and with all our gettings, let us get this understanding. And when, in the well spent hours of a studious retirement, we shall have secured the inestimable treasure, let charity go forth, and disperse it abroad. For so the blessed saint of this day, having been trained to knowledge in the school of solitude, was called forth to action upon the theatre of the world. Sequestered, for a season, from the scenes of vanity and iniquity, he passed his first years in the recesses of the desert, under the discipline of the Holy Ghost, the tuition of angels, and in conversation with God by meditation and prayer. But when, in the providential disposition of men and things, the day came for his "showing unto Israel," then he brake forth like a stream from the bowels of the earth, or the sun from a cloud, to refresh the thirsty soul with the glad tidings of the gospel, and enlighten the world with the glorious truths of the kingdom of heaven. Hereby showing us, that knowledge and charity, between them, make up the character of a minister of Christ. Charity cannot edify without knowledge; nor will knowledge edify without charity. Let our retirement, therefore, resemble that of the Baptist, that our manifestation also may be like his; and that as our charity abounds in knowledge, our knowledge may not be unfruitful in charity. So shall we escape the condemnation of the heretic and schismatic, by adhering to the communion of the faithful; avoid the philosophical pride of the Gentile, and the pharisaical self-sufficiency of the Jew, by writing after the copies of the apostles; guard against the sin of our first parent, by an imitation of Jesus Christ; and finally

inherit the thrones of the fallen angels, by an union with the God of love. To which blessed estate may God of his infinite mercy bring us all, by the means of that knowledge which worketh by love, unto the edification of his church, and his own glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## DISCOURSE XXVII.

THE DUTY OF TAKING NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW.

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*Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow ; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself ; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—Matt. vi. 34.*

WHAT? Take no thought, no thought at all for the morrow? Attend only to the day that is passing over us, and make no provision for the future? Are we not to look forward; to suppose a continuation of life, and a want of the means which are necessary to support it? Should we sit still, with our arms folded, and expect that Providence will supply us with those means, without using our own endeavours? Is not the husbandman, when he has reaped one harvest, to sow his seed for another? Most undoubtedly he is. The scriptures suppose all men to have some occupation, and to be labouring in it, that the state of the world may be upholden. They tell us, in the Old Testament, that “the hand of the diligent maketh rich;” and, in the New, that “if any man will not work, neither should he eat.” In the former, man is sent to learn wisdom of “the ant, which provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest,” with a view to the approaching winter; in the latter, we read, that “the parents should lay up for the children.” In a word, no one thing is more severely condemned and exposed, than the folly of the sluggard, who has the presumption to tempt God, by imagining, that all the blessings of heaven will descend on the head of idleness, and that meat will drop into his mouth,



if he does but condescend to open it.—How are these very different directions to be reconciled?

The truth is, that the Greek word, here rendered *take no thought*, signifies properly, be not *anxious, solicitous, miserable*, about to-morrow; literally and strictly, be not of a *doubtful, divided mind*. For all care supposes a person to be wavering, drawn hither and thither by different motives, first one way and then another, not knowing how to fix and determine; since, when this is once firmly and finally done, the trouble ceases, and the man is at ease. Before that, the mind is *distracted*, that is, drawn diverse ways at the same time, like the body of a criminal, in some countries, torn in pieces by horses pulling in opposition to each other. They who have felt the torment of such a state of mind, know what I mean, and what is so beautifully expressed by the original word in this place of scripture, which thus kindly commands us, not to make ourselves wretched by anxious carings and apprehensions about the future; but, in all cases of difficulty, to perform diligently that part which appears wisest and best for us to perform; then to resign the matter into the hands of God; quietly and patiently waiting the event, before it comes, and humbly acquiescing in it, when it does come. In short, so to use our endeavours, as if they were to effect every thing; so to trust in God, as if they were to effect nothing.

But let us not be too hasty in blaming our worthy translators. They could not have been ignorant, any more than we are, that it was impossible for Christ to give such a precept as, at first sight, this appears now to be. But they wrote above 150 years ago; and there is good reason for supposing, that the expression, to *take thought*, did, at that time, generally denote the very thing which, as has been shown you, the Greek word most certainly means; *viz. to take anxious thought, or to be anxiously careful, to be uneasy*.

In this sense, which is the only true sense, “take no thought for the morrow,” is excellent advice; and advice which is much needed. All things are full of labour. Walk the streets of a large city, or travel the roads that lead to one, and you will soon be convinced of it. But the continual hurry and bustle, the incessant rolling and agitation without us, are nothing, if compared to those within us.

Whatever appearances men may put on, or however they may affect to disguise the matter, the world of minds is a very uneasy and restless world; and could it be fully and fairly disclosed to view, we should behold it, like another ocean, in some parts all storm and tempest; in others, ever ebbing and flowing; in no part, perfectly at rest. He who once, by the word of his power, calmed the winds, and laid the waves, when all was uproar and confusion among them, has spoken peace likewise to *this* troubled sea, in the discourse of which my text is the conclusion. Let us go over it together, and weigh well the reasons given by our Saviour, why man should cease to be anxious, and permit God to govern, in his own way, the world which he himself has made.

As anxiety proceeds from a *divided* state of mind, our Lord first speaks to that point, and strikes at the root of the disorder.—“No man can serve two masters.” The commands which they lay upon him will often be contrary to each other. Both cannot be obeyed; and while the man hesitates which to obey, sometimes inclining to one, sometimes to the other, he must needs be unhappy. Would you then enjoy peace and quietness within? Serve one master, and let that master be God. Do your duty, and trust him for the event. The wise son of Sirach is very bold upon this subject, and appeals to universal experience:—“Look at the generations of old, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded?” But why then are so many confounded? Because so few, so very few, do really trust in God, when the hour of trial comes. They have recourse to the enemy for expedients; they follow the directions and maxims of the world; they sell themselves to another master, and provoke God to forsake them. The reproof of the prophet Elijah comes home to us all, and admits of no reply —“Why halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him. But if Baal, then follow him.” Only be consistent; let profession and practice go together. It is the want of this consistency which exposes religion to the scoff of those who hate it, and does it more hurt than all the books that ever were written against it; as the examples of those, who, in despite of temptations, hold them fast by God, and continue steadfast unto the end, do it, perhaps, more good than all the books that ever were written *for* it. Of this, however, rest assured, that, try as long as you will,

and be as cunning as you please, “you cannot serve God and mammon.”

“Therefore (continues Christ), I say unto you, be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.” An unreasonable anxiety and solicitude about the things of the world, even *food* and *raiment*, the *necessaries* of life, is plainly deemed by our Lord to be a “serving of mammon.” He who is so intent even on the means of subsistence, as to lose all the satisfaction of it, has but little faith. He is, in effect, an unbeliever. On the other hand, to rely so much upon Providence, as to do nothing at all, is to tempt God. But to labour, without placing our trust and confidence in our labour, expecting all from the blessing of God; this is to obey him, to work with his providence, to set the springs of it a going, and to imitate Christ and the saints by a sedate care, and an industrious confidence. He whose mind, through the influence of religion upon it, is calm and resigned, will always exert his diligence to the best advantage. Fretfulness and impatience not only do not assist, but they hinder. A person in this state has not the use of his powers and faculties, which he otherwise would have; besides, that the Holy Spirit of God flies from such a temper, delighting to dwell in a meek, quiet, and contented heart.—But perhaps you have not things as you could wish to have them, through some fault, or mismanagement of your own; and it is this which troubles you. You have made some false step. Nothing more probable. We all make many. The famous Marshal Turenne, who was a good man, as well as a great general, used to say, He was not more obliged to any of his friends, than to one who had given him, at his first setting out in life, the following piece of advice:—“When you have made a false step, spend not a moment in vexing yourself, and moaning over it; but consider how it may best be repaired, and instantly set about it.”\*

\* “The mountainous nature of this country (the Pays de Vaud) subjects it to frequent torrents, which, when violent, sweep away vines, soil, and walls, in one common destruction. The inhabitants behold the havoc with a steady concern; and, without giving way to the clamorous rage of the French, or sinking into the gloomy despair of the English, think only of the most effectual means of repairing the loss.—As soon as the storm has abated, they begin, with admirable patience and perseverance, to

Christ, in his divine discourse, lays down several reasons, why men should not disquiet themselves about the wants of life, or concerning the future; but, having done their part, should repose themselves, in full confidence, on the goodness of God.

The first reason, is the experience of greater benefits already received.—“Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” You are uneasy, lest you should want proper food to support life, and proper raiment to clothe the body. Life and the body are certainly greater gifts than food and raiment. Who gave you *them*? God gave them; and gave them of his own will, before you could be in a capacity to ask them. Will not he, who gave the greater, give the less? Will not he, who gave life and the body, take care they shall be supported and clothed? Will he, who gave what you could not ask, withhold what you can and do ask at his hands? It is ingratitude to distrust your best benefactor. Consider likewise, under this head, the proofs you have had of God’s kindness in providing for you hitherto; look back on your past life, and mark the blessings, of various kinds, that have distinguished the several parts of it; the difficulties you have surmounted, the dangers you have escaped, and the favourable circumstances and connexions into which you have been led. Why should you apprehend, that he, who has been with you all your life long, should now be with you no longer? Recollect the promise,—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Above all things, forget not that greatest and most stupendous of mercies, that best and unspeakable gift of God, and the unanswerable argument formed upon the consideration of it by the apostle;—“He who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Reflect on this, and “be not faithless, but believing.”

The second reason alleged by Christ, is the example of the lesser animals, which the providence of God feeds, without their own labour.—“Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet

rebuild the walls, to carry fresh earth on hurdles to the top of the mountain, and to spread a new soil wherever the old has been washed away.”—Moore’s *View of Society and Manners in France, Switzerland, &c.* Vol. I. p. 313.



your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

The little innocent inhabitants of the air, which are continually flying around us, were not created only for the use of the body of man. They serve higher and nobler ends. They often read lectures, to which the greatest philosopher might attend, and be the better for them, if he would consider and apply them aright. When, therefore, you behold one of these choristers of heaven singing upon a naked bush, amidst the darkness and desolation of winter, might you not address it in some such manner as the following?—"Sweet bird, how cheerfully dost thou sit and sing; and yet knowest not where thou art, nor where thou shalt make thy next meal, and at night must shroud thyself in this same bush for a lodging, while the winds shall howl through it, and thy feathers shall be wet with the rain, or covered with the snow! How ought I to blush, who see before me such liberal provisions of my God, and find myself sitting warm under my own roof, yet am ready to droop through a distrustful and unthankful dulness! Had I so little certainty of my support and shelter, how anxious and heartless should I be; how little disposed to make music for thee or myself! Surely thou camest not hither without a providence; God sent thee not so much to delight, as to shame me out of my sullen unbelief, who, under far more apparent means of maintenance and protection, am less cheerful and confident. Reason and faith, alas, alas! have not yet done for me, what mere instinct does for thee; and want of foresight makes thee more merry, if not more happy here, than the foresight of better things maketh me. Certainly, thy providence, O God, is not impaired by those superior powers thou hast given me; let not my greater helps hinder me from possessing an holy security, and comfortable reliance on thee. I never knew an earthly father take care of his fowls, and neglect his children: and shall I suspect this of my heavenly Father? That man is unworthy to have God for his Father in heaven, who depends less upon his goodness, wisdom, and power, than upon a crop of corn, which may be spoiled either in the field, or the barn."\*

But forcibly as these little animals teach, the parts of inanimate nature are by no means behind hand with them.

\* See Bp. Hall's Occasional Meditations, No. xiv. and Quesnell in loc.

Walk into a flower garden, and see with what beautiful garments God has invested the perishable grass, which to day is, and to morrow withers away. Above the rest, look at the lovely white of the lily, pure and spotless as its parent, the light of heaven. Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like it. It resembles a greater than Solomon, whose face did shine as the sun, and whose raiment was white as the light, so as no fuller on earth, no effort of human skill and labour, could whiten it. From a flower of the field, then—from a flower of a moment's duration, man, who is made for heaven and eternity, may learn how low the care of Providence vouchsafes to stoop. And shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Shall he not protect and adorn his chosen people, the plants of his own hand, the flowers of his own paradise? Yes, verily, believe in him, and he shall bring it to pass. The light of his countenance shall shine, the dew of his celestial benediction shall descend upon you, enabling you to grow up and flourish, to reflect glory on your Maker, and to cheer the hearts of men. And although your appointed time on earth be short, and you likewise must fade away, and return to dust; yet, even from that dust can the same influences call you forth, to be clothed with honour and immortality, to enjoy a perpetual spring, and bloom for ever in unfading beauty. Such are the lessons of confidence in God's mercy, and resignation to his will, which meet us every time we take a walk in a garden.

Another reason urged by our Saviour against indulging that wretched care which has fretted so many hearts in pieces, is its fruitlessness. When we have been uneasy for half a century, what has it availed us? Nothing. It is not in our power to add a day to our lives, or a foot to our stature. Which of you, by being anxious and careful overmuch, can add one cubit to his stature? By taking contentedly and cheerfully our portion of food, the body attains in due time to that size and height which God has appointed, and lasts as long as he intends it should. Fretfulness and impatience may diminish something, but can add nothing. To what purpose, then, serves anxiety? If it cannot do the less, it certainly cannot do the greater. Uneasiness and distrust render us unworthy of that blessing, without which all our labour is in vain. And no wonder they should do so. He who *distrusts* a friend, is very near *forsaking* him;

and a man is not far from murmuring against Providence, when he is dissatisfied with its conduct. This is so very dangerous a temper of mind, that we should always be on our guard against falling into it, as many are apt to do, upon slight and common occasions, merely for want of consideration. If we acknowledge a God who governs the world, let us not distrust him, or find fault with his government, but repent, tremble, and adore.

To do otherwise, is, in effect, to renounce our religion, and return to *heathenism*. It is our Lord's own observation—"Therefore be not anxiously thoughtful, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek." They employ their whole care in seeking them. And why? Because they either believe there is no God, or, if there be, that he does not concern himself with the affairs of the world. In either case, men are left to themselves, and have no one else on whom to depend. With believers the case is different. "Your heavenly Father (says Christ to his disciples) knoweth that ye have need of all these things." There cannot be a more expressive and affecting image. A child, who has a father in being, can only wish that his necessities should be made known to that father; because, when once known, he is certain they will be supplied. But from *our* Father no secrets are hidden. His wisdom is equal to his goodness, and his power equal to both. When therefore we have used our own endeavours, as he has directed us to do, we may, with the confidence of children, "cast all our care upon him; since," without doubt, "he careth for us." The misfortune is, that, amongst all our cares, we care little for him, and think little of him, unless when the attention is roused by a clap of thunder, or some extraordinary event, which affects us, for the time, as that does. We have only a distant, uncertain notion of him floating in our minds. We do not consider him as present round about us, and, what is more, present within us, and perfectly acquainted with all that is passing in the inmost chamber of the heart. We neglect him, and therefore he seems to neglect us—I say, he *seems* to neglect us; for that very seeming neglect is graciously intended to humble, and reform, and bring us to a better mind, that we may become objects of his favour, and partake of his blessing.

This is our Lord's next argument.—“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Christ does not mean to say, that if a man will become religious, he will immediately give him wealth. Certainly not: since, if the party in question were ever so good a man, that might be the most effectual way in the world to make him a bad man. He might have something lurking in his constitution either of body or mind, which would render him incapable of resisting the temptations of a large fortune; and He, who knows all things, knows this would be the case. Numberless are the persons, to whose happiness such an estate would not add a single grain, but quite the reverse; and the greatest kindness that can be showed them is to keep it out of their way, though you will never persuade them to think so. But thus much the promise implies, that to him who first and principally seeks, as he ought to do, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and is not wanting to himself, shall be added food and raiment, and such other things as are convenient and proper for him, such things as are really and truly, all circumstances considered, best for him upon the whole, and will hereafter appear to have been so. But is not wealth then a blessing? To those who can manage and employ it to the glory of God, and the good of mankind, it is a blessing, for this reason, because “ it is more blessed to give, than to receive:” but the number of these are small, very small indeed. If religion therefore does not give a man wealth, it does not give him that, which is much more likely, at the long run, to prejudice, than to benefit him. If religion does not give a man wealth, it makes him happy without it; if it does not enable him to have what he likes, it enables him to like what he has. And, as an apostle observes, “ the time is short; this present scene of things will soon be changed; it remains, therefore, that he who has an estate, be (toward God) as if he had none;” which is much the harder task of the two.

Since, then, the promise of worldly necessities and comforts is made on the condition of seeking first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, let him, who thinks he has not his share of good things in this life, retire into his closet for half an hour, and ask himself a few questions; as,—Have I ever really and in earnest sought the kingdom of God, and



his righteousness? Do I so much as know what they are? or have I taken any pains to inquire? If I have inquired, and understood their nature, do I not rather seek after any thing, than after them? Is not either business, or pleasure, or even idleness itself, that most irksome and tormenting of states, preferred before them? Do I give one hour out of the four and twenty to the contemplation of them? Have I entered into the kingdom of God? or rather, Has the kingdom of God entered into me? Is it within me, and does it manifest itself without me? Does Christ rule in my heart by faith? and do my appetites and passions move in obedience to that heavenly principle? Do I love God, and delight in prayer and praise? Do I love my neighbour, and rejoice to assist and benefit him, to cover his faults, and overlook his infirmities? Are those tempers alive and reigning in me, which Christ has pronounced *blessed*? and, in the general and common course of my thoughts, words, and actions, do I consider myself as in his presence, to whom I must give account? The answers returned by conscience to such questions as these, would perhaps show the best man living, that if he have not all he wanted, there is no just reason for complaint. There is another consideration which may completely settle your minds, on the subject of the distresses to which the righteous are sometimes subject in this present life. A very good man may be rendered much better by trials and afflictions. Proportionable to his sufferings will be his reward; and if you could propose the question to those saints in heaven, who once wandered, destitute, afflicted, tormented, in sheepskins and goatskins, upon earth, they would tell you, they do not now wish to have done otherwise.

Our Lord closes his interesting and divine discourse on this subject of worldly care and anxiety, in the words of my text, with an argument drawn from the evident absurdity of anticipating sorrow, and rendering ourselves unhappy beforehand.—“Be not therefore careful for the morrow; for the morrow will be careful for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” The meaning is, that, having such a promise from our heavenly Father, of being provided for as his children, if we are but dutiful children, we should not render ourselves miserable by forestalling mischief, and adding the future to the present; but that,

having, through his grace, transacted the business, and overcome the difficulties of the day, we should at night disburden our minds of solicitude, and rest our weary heads upon our pillows in peace; since the trouble of each day is sufficient for the day; and he, who has been with us to day, will be with us to morrow.

In this ever memorable and most important precept, Christ consults our natural quiet, no less than our spiritual welfare. The chief sources of uneasiness are, vexation at what is *past*, or forebodings of what is *to come*: whereas what is *past* ought to give us no disquiet, except that of repentance for our faults; and what is *to come* ought much less to affect us, because, with regard to us and our concerns, it is not, and perhaps never will be. The *present* is what we are apt to neglect. That, well employed, will render the remembrance of the *past* pleasant, and the prospect of the *future* comfortable. Attention to the duties of the day is like the manna, when it descended fresh and grateful from above; anxiety about the events of to morrow resembles the same manna, when, distrustfully laid up contrary to the divine command, it bred worms and putrified. Give us, then, blessed Lord, even as thou hast commanded us to ask at thy hands, our *daily* bread, and let it not be corrupted by discontented and unthankful imaginations. Thou art the same, yesterday, to day, and for ever. Thou hast borne us from the womb, thou hast supported us from our youth up, even until now. Thou forsakest none but those who have first forsaken thee. Only enable us to trust in thee, and then we shall never be confounded.

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## DISCOURSE XXVIII.

### THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR.

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*Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.—*  
2 Cor. v. 17.

THE departure of the old year, and the entrance of a new one, cannot but suggest many useful and very important

reflections to a thinking man. I will beg leave to offer some few to your minds, exactly as they have arisen in mine.

The departure of the old year may, I think, fitly be compared to the death of an old friend; and our behaviour in one case regulated by that which generally obtains in the other.

1. When we have lost a friend, our first care naturally is, to see that he be decently interred; to follow him, mourning, to the grave; to let his funeral remind us of our own; and to erect a monument to his memory.

The past year is, to all intents and purposes, lost to us, and numbered among the dead. It is gone to join the multitude of years that have died before it. They arise from their seats in the repositories of the dead, to receive it among them; it is now become like one of them; and all that hurry and bustle of business and pleasure, which distinguished and animated it, have sunk into silence and oblivion. It will return no more upon the earth, and the scenes that were acted in it are closed for ever. It has lived, however, and we have enjoyed it; let us pay it the honours due to the deceased, and drop a tear over its tomb. We cannot take a final leave of any thing to which we have been accustomed, without a sentiment of concern. Objects, otherwise of the most indifferent nature, claim this, and they never fail of obtaining it, at the hour of parting. The idea of the *last* is always a melancholy idea; and it is so, perhaps, for this among other reasons, because, whatever be the immediate subject, an application is presently made to ourselves. Thus, in the case before us, it is recollected—and let it be recollected—it is good for us to recollect it—that what has happened to the year, must happen to us. On each of us a day must dawn, which is to be our last. When we shall have buried a few more years, we must ourselves be buried; our friends shall weep at our funeral; and what we have been, and what we have done, will live only in their remembrance. The reflection is sorrowful; but it is just, and salutary; equally vain and imprudent would be the thought of putting it away from us. Meanwhile, let us cast our eyes back on that portion of time which is come to its conclusion, and see whether the good thoughts that have occurred to our minds, the good words that have been uttered, and the good deeds that have been performed by us, will not

furnish materials, with which we may erect a lasting monument to the memory of the departed year.

2. When a friend is dead and buried, we take a pensive kind of pleasure in going over again and again the hours we formerly passed with him, either in prosperity, or adversity. Let us pursue the same course; it may be done to great advantage, in this instance. The grand secret of a religious life is, to "set God always before us;" to live under a constant sense of his providence; to observe and study his dispensations toward us, that they may produce their proper effects, and draw forth suitable returns from us. Too often we suffer them to glide unheeded by us, and never afterward think of recalling them to consideration! It were well if we kept a diary of our lives, for this purpose; if we "so numbered our *days*, that we might apply our hearts unto wisdom." But certainly, no *year* should be permitted to expire, without giving occasion to a retrospect. The principal events that have befallen us in it should be recollected, and the requisite improvements be raised from them severally, by meditation. What preservations from dangers, spiritual or temporal have been vouchsafed; what new blessings granted, or old ones continued, to me and mine; to my friends, my neighbours, my church, my country; and how have I expressed, in word and in deed, my gratitude and thankfulness for them? With what losses or crosses, what calamities or sicknesses, have we been visited: and have such visitations rendered us more penitent, more diligent, devout, and holy, more humble, and more charitable? If the light of heaven hath shined on our tabernacle, and we have enjoyed the hours in health and happiness, let us enjoy them over again in the remembrance: if we have lived under a dark and stormy sky, and affliction has been our lot, let us consider that so much of that affliction is gone, and the less there is of it to come. But whatever may be gone, or to come, all is from God, who sends it not without a reason, and with whom, if we cooperate, no event can befall us, which will not in the end turn to our advantage. Such reflections as these should indeed be always made at the time when the events do befall us. But if not made then, they should be made at some time; which yet will not be done, unless some time be appointed for making them. And what time so fit, as that when one year ends, and another begins;



when, having finished a stage of our journey, we survey, as from an eminence, the ground we have passed; and the sight of the objects brings to mind the occurrences upon that part of the road?

3. When a friend is taken from us, we begin to consider, whether we profited by him, as we ought, while he was with us; whether we sufficiently observed his good example, to imitate it; his wholesome advice, to follow it; his faithful and kind reproofs, to be the better for them, by amending our faults. In the course of the foregoing year, many good examples must we have seen and heard of; and by means of books and conversation from without, and hints from our own consciences within, much wholesome advice, many faithful and kind reproofs, must we have met with. For all these admonitions, are we the better, and have we profited by them? Let it be supposed, for instance, that we had been accustomed aforetime to pray but seldom, and when we did, to pray without attention, and without fruit. Do we now observe the hours of prayer with more constancy, and less distraction? Do we really and truly find any pleasure in our devotions? or are we dragged unwillingly to them as a task, and, consequently, rejoice with all our hearts when they are over? For years together, perhaps, we have turned our backs on the communion table: is it in our intention to give that holy ordinance a more frequent attendance for the future? Do we hear a sermon with a determined resolution to carry what is said into practice, or as a matter of amusement only, and a subject whereon to display our powers of criticism? Does the current of our thoughts flow in any degree more pure than formerly? Is our conversation become innocent, at least, if not improving; free from slander and scandal, from pride and conceit? Are our actions more and more directed by the rules of justice and charity? Above all, what use do we make of the talents with which it hath pleased God to entrust us, particularly those two, our *time*, and our *fortunes*? Is it altogether such, as that we shall be able, on our death-beds, to think on it, before God, with comfort and confidence? When we examine ourselves as to the progress we have made in the Christian life since this day twelvemonth, do we find that we have made any progress at all; that we have discarded any evil habits, or acquired any good ones; that we have mor-

tified any vices, or brought forward to perfection any virtues? In one word, as we grow older, do we grow wiser and better? These are the questions which should be asked, at the conclusion of a year—and may the heart of every person here present return to them an answer of peace!

4. While we are following a friend to his grave, it is obvious to reflect, that his day of trial is at an end, that the time allotted him for his probation is over, and his condition fixed for eternity. Engaged in the awful speculation, we can hardly avoid the following reflection;—if, instead of his being taken from us, we had been taken from him, what, at this time, had been our lot and portion in the other world?—By the favour of God, we have lived to the end of the year: we might have died before it. In such case, where had we now been? Have we no misgivings within? Do we feel as if we thought that all would have been right? Are we conscious to ourselves of having stood prepared, at all times, and for all events, in such habits of repentance, faith, and charity, as would have rendered our passage hence welcome and prosperous? If not, should we delay for a moment to make such preparation, and to stand in such habits? Suppose any person had means of being assured, and actually were assured, that he should die upon the last day of the year into which he is now entered; we should all agree upon the manner in which such person ought to spend the year. There would not be, I dare say, one dissentient voice. Yet, upon the supposition here made, this person has before him a whole year certain. Is not the obligation, then, still stronger upon every one of us? For that man must be out of his senses, who can bring himself to imagine, that *he* has a whole year certain, or a month, or a day, or an hour.—The argument is not to be answered.

I have somewhere read of one, who, having strong religious impressions, and feeling terrible apprehensions whenever the ideas of death and judgment presented themselves, contrived so to habituate his mind to the contemplation of them, as to render them, ever after, not only easy, but agreeable. His custom was, to consider each evening as the close of life, the darkness of the night as the time of death, and his bed as his grave. He composed himself for the one, therefore, as he would have done for the other. On retiring to rest, he fell on his knees; confessed, and entreated

pardon for the transgressions of the day ; renewed his faith in the mercies of God, through Christ ; expressed, in a prayer of intercession, his charity toward all mankind ; and then committed his soul into the hands of his Creator and Redeemer, as one who was to awake no more in this world. His sleep, after this, was perfectly sweet ; the days added to his life were estimated as clear gain ; and when the last came, it ended with as much tranquillity as all that had preceded. I would wish to recommend this example to your imitation. The practice will cost you some pains and trouble, perhaps, for a little while ; but you will never have cause to repent that you bestowed them ; and I know of no better method whereby you can place yourselves in a state of constant security and comfort.

5. When we say, that we have lost a friend, we can mean only, that we have lost him for a time. He is not finally perished : we shall see him again ; and, therefore, it behoves us to consider, what our sensations will be at the sight of him, which must always depend on our usage of him during his life. We shall see him with joy, or grief, as we have formerly used him well, or otherwise ; and all that we have ever said or done relative to him, will then be known. We are too apt to forget this circumstance ; and seem to think, that when they are dead with whom we have been concerned, no farther account will be taken of our behaviour toward them. Otherwise, the consideration could not but have a great effect in the regulation of our conduct.

The case is exactly the same respecting the old year now departed. It is indeed, as we have observed before, numbered among the dead ; but, like the dead, it will, in one sense, arise, and appear to us again, and we shall be made to recollect the usage it received at our hands, while we were in possession of it upon earth. Memory will in that hour be quickened and perfected. Like a mirror holden before our eyes, it will represent faithfully to our minds the various transactions of the year, in which we bore a part ; and we shall be forced to recognize and acknowledge the thoughts, the words, and the actions, which passed during its continuance with us. May we find pleasure in reviewing them ! But review them we must—and so must He, who is to be our Judge, at the day of his second manifestation.

That day draws on apace. For not only friends die, and years expire, and we ourselves shall do the same, but the world itself approaches to its end. It likewise must die. Once already has it suffered a watery death: it is to be destroyed a second time by fire. A celebrated author, having in his writings followed it through all its changes, from the creation to the consummation, describes the eruption of this fire, and the progress it is to make, with the final and utter devastation to be effected by it, when all sublunary nature shall be overwhelmed and sunk in a molten deluge. In this situation of things, he stands over the world, as if he had been the only survivor, and pronounces its funeral oration in a strain of sublimity scarce ever equalled by mere man.

“ Let us reflect, upon this occasion, on the vanity and transient glory of this habitable world. How, by the force of one element breaking loose upon the rest, all the varieties of nature, all the works of art, all the labours of men, are reduced to nothing. All that we admired and adored before, as great and magnificent, is obliterated, or vanished; and another form and face of things, plain, simple, and every where the same, overspreads the whole earth. Where are now the great empires of the world, and their imperial cities? their pillars, trophies, and monuments of glory? Show me where they stood, read the inscription, tell me the conqueror's name. What remains, what impressions, what difference or distinction do you discern in the mass of fire? Rome itself, eternal Rome, the great city, the empress of the world, whose domination and superstition, ancient and modern, make a large part of the history of this earth; what is become of her now? She laid her foundations deep, and her palaces were strong and sumptuous; *she glorified herself, and lived deliciously, and said in her heart, I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow.* But her hour is come, she is wiped away from the face of the earth, and buried in everlasting oblivion. But not cities only, and the works of mens' hands—the everlasting hills, the mountains and rocks, are melted as wax before the sun, and their place is nowhere to be found. Here stood the Alps, the load of the earth, that covered many countries, and reached their arms from the ocean to the Black Sea: this huge mass of stone is softened and dissolved, as a tender cloud into rain. Here



stood the African mountains, and Atlas with his top above the clouds ; there was frozen Caucasus, and Taurus, and Imaus, and the mountains of Asia : and yonder, toward the north, stood the Riphæan hills, clothed in ice and snow. All these are vanished, dropped away as the snow upon their heads !—Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints !”

Thus, you see, “ Old things are passed away ;” but out of their ashes a new creation shall spring forth. According to the divine promise, which cannot fail, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwell righteousness, joy, and life, and from which, consequently, sin, sorrow, and death, are for ever excluded. We wait, in faith and patience, for the time when we ourselves shall be restored with the world, and “ all things shall become new.” To prepare for this glorious and long expected time, let us be first “ renewed in the spirit of our minds ; let us put off the old man, corrupt with the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man, which of God is created in righteousness and true holiness ;” addressing ourselves, for the necessary strength and power, to him that sitteth on the throne, who saith from thence, “ Behold, I make all things new.” This done, we shall descend undismayed to the grave, and our flesh shall rest there in hope, like a grain of corn in its furrow, to appear, in another and better form, at the appointed season, to begin an everlasting spring, and be for ever young. And when can we enter with so great propriety upon the blessed work as now, when a new year affords us opportunity to repair the miscarriages of the old one ? Let me leave in your ears and upon your minds the charming words of that kind and affectionate invitation made, in one of the sacred books, by the Redeemer to his church, who, you know, throughout the scriptures, is considered in the relation of his spouse :—

“ Lo, the winter will soon be past ; the rain will be over and gone ; the flowers will appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds will come ; and the voice of the turtle will be heard in our land. The fig tree will put forth her green figs, and the vines, with the tender grape, give a good smell.—Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

## DISCOURSE XXIX.

## THE CHILDREN IN THE TEMPLE.

*And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?—Matt. xxi. 15, 16.*

THIS part of sacred story presents us with a very extraordinary scene. Messiah, the promised Saviour, prefigured by the law, foretold by the prophets, and universally expected to appear, appears accordingly. Exactly in the manner described by Zechariah, he makes his public entry, meek and lowly, into his capital city, Jerusalem. Agreeably to the celebrated passages in Malachi and Haggai,—“The Lord, whom men sought, came to his temple,” and by his personal presence rendered “the glory of the latter house greater than the glory of the former.” “He came to his own, but his own received him not.” The rulers of the then church would not acknowledge him: they were offended (it was but a natural consequence) with those who did so. The voices of children proclaiming his titles, sounded harsh and grating in their ears; and they hinted by their question, that he himself ought to reprove, rebuke, and silence these little heralds of his praises. “Hearest thou what these say?”—as if they had spoken blasphemy. But mark the answer:—“Jesus saith unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” In other words, “You are ignorant of your own scriptures; at least, you do not recollect what is written in Psalm viii., that when God is to be glorified for his works, and those who should do it will not do it, he makes even children the instruments of shaming and confounding the adversaries of his truth: *out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he perfects praise*; or, as it

is in the original Hebrew, *ordains, appoints, constitutes strength, to still the enemy and the avenger.*"

The proposition arising from the text is evidently this,—that God is pleased to esteem himself honoured when children are taught to confess and to praise his holy name. A few considerations shall be offered, touching the grounds and reasons of such proposition, whence an application will follow to the charity which this Discourse is designed to recommend.

On hearing that "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God ordains strength to still the enemy," the thought which first strikes us is that suggested in another passage of scripture, wherein he says, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." This is the circumstance which distinguishes the works of God from the works of man. When man has an end to accomplish, he must employ means originally, and in themselves suited to that end. The materials and the persons who use them must be every way proper, and equal to the work. By him who is building a house, great preparations are made, plentiful stores of every thing necessary laid in, skilful and able artificers provided; and we know beforehand, that, by a due application of the causes, the effect may be produced. In the works of God it is otherwise. Means unlikely and improbable are chosen, persons weak and naturally unable selected, that the power may appear to be not in them, but in him. In this way he delights to show forth his glory through the whole creation. At the beginning, light shone out of darkness, order out of confusion, and all the beauty and fulness of the world which we behold, arose from a chaos, "without form, and void." By a silent, unseen, mysterious process, the fairest flower of the garden springs from a small, insignificant seed; the majestic oak of the forest from an acorn; the strongest and wisest man from a wretched, helpless, and senseless infant; the holy and exalted saint from a miserable sinner. A prophet, with great justness and propriety, styles this, "the *hiding* of the divine power." And thus, upon the same plan, when the gospel was to be preached, and the world saved, not a company of philosophers, or an army of heroes, but a few illiterate Jewish fishermen were sent forth, to accomplish the mighty work. Hear with what force and energy St. Paul treats this point.—"The foolishness of God

is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." Then follows the reason; "that no flesh should glory in his presence." The case of the children in the temple, confounding by their Hosannas the pride and malignity of the enemies of Christ, was, therefore, by no means single. It was upon the general scheme of the divine proceedings, as the power and skill of the artist are always proportionably manifested by the meanness and weakness of the instruments employed to effect his purpose.

But, *secondly*, God is still farther honoured when children are taught to confess and proclaim his truths, because hereby it is shown, that his truths are such as children may confess and proclaim. All may receive the saving doctrines of our religion, and learn its wholesome precepts. Over the door of the school of the celebrated Plato, we are told, was written a sentence, importing, that no one must presume to enter there, who had not first studied and rendered himself master of geometry. No such requisition is made by our blessed Master of those who mean to enter themselves in the number of his scholars. In other respects, learned or unlearned, wise or unwise, noble or ignoble, great or small, young or old, come who will, and he shall be instructed in all things necessary for him to learn, in order to his salvation; in a day, in an hour, he shall know more than the sages of antiquity were able to discover, from the dispersion of the nations at Babel to the coming of Christ, or would have discovered, from thence to the consummation of all things. This is a very wonderful consideration; and we must dwell a little upon it, for the honour and praise of revelation, and of that Being who vouchsafed it to man.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." A child easily repeats and understands these few words of Moses. But the child who does so is at once in possession of a truth, which heathen philosophy, for ages and generations, sought in vain; none could then with any degree of



certainly determine, by whom the world was made; whether it were made at all; whether there were many gods, or one.

If the world were made by a good and gracious God, whence came so much evil as we all see and know to be in it? Here the wisdom of paganism was for ever at a stand. Bewildered and lost in its reasonings and guesses upon the subject, it soon came to question, whether God were indeed good and gracious, or whether there could be any God who governed such a world. Let these men listen to a child, nurtured in the Christian scriptures.—“By one man’s disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” What plainer or farther information can be desired?

Mankind have always found themselves tempted and carried on by their lusts and passions to offend God, by transgressing that law (whatever it might be) under which they lived. But who among them could tell the means by which they were to be reconciled to the offended Deity? Not one. Infinite were the devices and fancies of superstition to effect such reconciliation; but all in vain. It must have been dropped, and “let alone for ever,” by them; whereas, every child with us knows, that “Christ has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and is become the author of salvation to all who believe in him, and walk according to that belief.”

At a certain time, we die. Our bodies are laid in the earth, and moulder to dust. And what is to befall them afterward? Where is the wise man of the world that can give us instruction and assurance on this point?—“Son of man, can these dry bones live?”—is a question not to be answered out of the Christian school. *In* that school any child can answer it.—“Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that sleep. For as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” “Had Jesus Christ delivered no other declaration than this last (says an excellent writer), he had pronounced a message of inestimable importance, and well worthy of that splendid

apparatus of prophecy and miracles with which his mission was introduced and attested: a message in which the wisest of mankind would rejoice to find an answer to their doubts, and rest to their inquiries." The observation is just and noble. And yet, such a message one of the heathen sages, were he now living, might receive by the first child he met in the street.

In this manner, to silence false philosophy and pretended wisdom, has God "ordained strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings," while by them are acknowledged and proclaimed the most concerning truths, which none of the philosophers of Greece and Rome could discover; the creation and redemption of the world; the origin and abolition of evil; the resurrection of the dead; and the final judgment. These were the points in which mankind long wanted and wished to be informed. Yet many have been the scoffs and sneers thrown out by unbelievers against the gospel, as being the religion of women and children. Never surely was wit worse employed. For if the religion be in itself true and excellent, it can receive no prejudice from the circumstance of being embraced and cultivated by women and children. Just the contrary; since if God ever vouchsafed a religion to the world, it must be adapted to either sex, and to every age. Christianity is that religion, and glories in being so.

Thirdly. There is in the temper and disposition of children something peculiarly acceptable to God our Saviour.— "They brought young children to Christ, that he should touch them. His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Verily I say unto you, that if any man shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Children, then, are capable of benefit by Christ; they are capable of his blessing on earth, and his presence in heaven; subjects of his kingdom under grace, and heirs of his kingdom in glory. The best office, therefore, we can perform for them, is to be the means of bringing them to the knowledge of him, that they may be partakers of these benefits, and so glorify their Father which is in heaven. He is pleased when we are thus employed. Nay,

he sets these children before us, as little patterns and models of what, in heart and mind, we ourselves ought to be. Men, if they think of entering into his kingdom, must be converted, and become as little children, without pride, without wrath, without lust, without avarice, without ambition, without prejudice, without guile, open and teachable, all innocence, simplicity, sincerity. These tempers of little children constitute the ornaments of religion; and charming it is to behold them displayed in the life of a child of God! "The wisdom that is from above," says St. James, as if this very subject had been then in his eye, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." View the furious Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughters, exceedingly mad against the disciples of Jesus, and persecuting them even to strange cities; till suddenly humbled to the dust, by a light and a voice from heaven, you hear him, with all the meekness of an infant, exclaiming,—“Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do!” Many are the changes of this kind that have been wrought, and many in every age will be wrought, through the power of the gospel. By it, in various ways, men are conformed to its temper and spirit: for a due and proper notion of that temper and spirit, Christ refers us to the state of childhood; a state through which, to sanctify it for all, himself did not disdain to pass; and in that, as in every other state, glorified the Father who sent him. Why, therefore, should it be thought a thing incredible, that “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God should ordain strength, and perfect praise?”

Lastly. God is honoured, wherever children are taught to confess and to praise his holy name, because it appears, that his religion is there known and propagated. The circumstance is a proof that the country where it has taken place is a Christian country; and a pledge, that it will continue to be such.

Under all the divine dispensations from the beginning, no duty is set higher, or more insisted on, than that of instructing children in the knowledge of religion.—“Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.” What more, or greater, can be said of any mere man? Attend to the reason, which

immediately follows.—“For I know him, that he will command his children after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”\*

Thus again, under the law:—“These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:” for what purpose, or for whose sake? Of themselves alone? By no means:—“And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”† Children, on their part, are supposed to be often asking questions upon these subjects, and so to put their parents, teachers, or friends, upon conversation of this kind.—“And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.”‡

Respecting Christian parents, they are most expressly enjoined to “bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” and to the praise of young Timothy, as well as of those relations who had been his instructors, it is said, “that from a child he had known the holy scriptures, able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Considering these precepts and examples, who could believe he was travelling through a Christian country, when he found the children in it speaking and acting like heathens; or, perhaps, in a manner that would disgrace heathens?

But suppose no such precepts or examples had been recorded. Religion is not only truth; it is truth the most interesting, the most dear, and valuable. It is that on which a man depends for his comfort and joy; for his safe conduct through this life, and his eternal happiness in the next. Would he deprive his children of this comfort, this joy, this safeconduct, this eternal happiness? Would he suffer them to live and die in error and vice, if it were in his power to prevent it? Can he bear the thought of seeing them at the last great day, standing, with the reprobates of all ages, at the *left* hand, and departing into never-ending

\* Gen. xviii. 18.

† Deut. vi. 6.

‡ Exod. xii. 26.



misery ! The wretched ignorant idolater, who, in old time, made his children pass through the fire to Moloch, is less to be blamed than such a parent as this.

Should there, however, be a Christian country found, in which the children are as above described, of one thing we may be abundantly certain, that such a country cannot long continue Christian. They who are now children, will, in a few years, become men and women ; they will soon compose the great body of the public : of what kind will that public be ? And how much more depraved still will be the descendants of that public ! In such a nation, matters must go on from bad to worse, till the wrath of God break forth, and there be no remedy. The inhabitants will either fall by the sword of the enemy, or be led away into captivity, or consumed by civil dissensions, biting and devouring one another. For wise and most important reasons, therefore, it was, that, when God established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, he commanded the fathers that they should make them known to their children ; that the generation to come should know them, even the children which should be born ; who should arise and declare them to their children ; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.\*

Had this divine injunction been obeyed, religious knowledge would have been regularly transmitted by parents to their children, from generation to generation. But that knowledge once lost (as from various causes it has been lost) by parents, ignorance must thenceforward be transmitted in the place of it. In the present state of things among us, many are the parents, who can neither teach their children, nor afford to pay for their being taught. How melancholy, and, in the end, how fatal to society must be the consequences, unless the cause be taken up by the charitable and well disposed !—Blessed be God, it has been taken up by Britons, in a manner unknown to any other age or nation. At the yearly meeting in the Cathedral of the metropolis, 6000 poor children, neatly clothed in the uniform of their respective schools, are seen arranged in rising circles, and heard sounding forth together the praises of God. Struck with what they saw and heard (and I suppose the like never was seen or heard), two noblemen of the kingdom of Portugal.

\* Ps. lxxviii. 5.

and consequently of the Romish persuasion, were overheard to exclaim, at one of these solemnities—"This is life indeed—We never lived before!"—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings was praise thus perfected!"

Children clothed and instructed in other parts of the kingdom, cannot meet in this world; but all, if they make a proper use of what they learn, will meet in the next, to give thanks to God, and acknowledge the kindness of their benefactors. A more powerful consideration cannot be urged (and therefore, no other needeth to be urged), to encourage all parties concerned in these charities, to perform their respective duties—those who have ability, to give liberally; those who teach, to do it with fidelity; those who learn with diligence.

## DISCOURSE XXX.

### CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SEA.

*The Sea is his, and he made it.*—Ps. xcv. 5.

WHEN man was first formed, creation was his book, and God his preceptor. The elements were so many letters, by means of which, when rightly understood, and put together, the wisdom, power and goodness of the great Creator became legible to him.

The proficiency made by Adam under his heavenly teacher, appears from the circumstance of his imposing upon the creatures, when they were brought to him for that purpose, *names* expressive of their natures; a task which he could never have performed, unless, by the assistance of his divine guide, he had first been introduced to an intimate acquaintance with those natures.

Happy the times, when all knowledge thus lay in one volume; when the pursuit of wisdom was attended by pleasure, and followed by devotion! For who doth not find delight in contemplating the works of the Lord? Who, when he hath duly contemplated the works, can forbear to praise the Workmaster?

The great and learned champion of the Roman church, who spent the best part of his life in sifting the disputes between the catholics and protestants, composed, toward the close of his days, a small treatise upon the ascent of the soul to God by meditation on the creatures, which, from thenceforth, he made his constant companion, and was wont to say, it was more satisfaction to him to have been the author of that, than of all his large volumes of controversy.

The raptures with which the penmen of the holy scriptures expatiate upon the perfections of God, as displayed in the creation, are well known. And could we bring our minds habitually into the same train of thinking, every walk we take would begin with admiration, and end with praise. We should always, upon such occasions, *think* what the psalmist has so finely *expressed*, after a survey of the heavens above, and the earth beneath—*O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!* And who, that looks around him from the delightful place where we now are,\* can forbear to add, *No is this great and wide sea also!* For of this truth let us never be unmindful, that wonderful as the sea is in itself, and beneficial as it is to the sons of men, all its wonders and all its benefits reflect glory and honour on him who formed, and poured it abroad—Let us remember, that *The sea is his, and he made it.*

Such an object, continually before our eyes, invites and demands our attention; and religion calls upon us to search out the riches of divine power and goodness contained in it.

When we place ourselves upon the shore, and from thence behold that immense body of waters, stretching away on all sides, far as the eye can reach; and when we consider how large a portion of the globe is covered in like manner; what a noble idea are we hereby enabled to form of the immensity of that Being who, in the emphatical language of scripture, is said not only to *weigh the mountains in a balance*, but to *take up the sea in the hollow of his hand!* In whose sight, the hills are but as dust, the ocean is no more than a drop. The immeasurable breadth of the sea may remind us of God's boundless mercy; its unfathomable depth holds forth an image of his unsearchable judgments.

When we see a mass of water rising up by a gradual

\* This Discourse was composed at Brighthelmstone.

ascent, till the sky seems, as it were, to descend, and close upon it; a thought immediately strikes us—What is it which prevents these waters from breaking in upon, and overflowing the land, as they appear in heaps so much above it? Let us adore that unseen power, which, by a perpetual decree, keeps them in their proper place, nor suffers them to intrude themselves into one which is not theirs. It is God's will that it should be so; when he gives the word, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther*, plain sand proves a sufficient barrier. The obedient waves bow themselves, and retire. They continue this day according to thine ordinance, O Lord, *for all things serve thee*, but rebellious man, whom nothing can restrain from passing the bounds set him by thy commandments!

Hear attentively the *noise* of the sea—How grand and awful the sound! even as the voice of the Almighty God, when he speaketh! St. John, in the revelation, to give us some notion of the praises of God as uttered by men and angels, or the choirs of heaven and earth united before the throne, has chosen this similitude, joining two others with it; the creation does not afford a fourth—"I heard as it were, the voice of *much people* in heaven, and the voice of *many waters*, and the voice of *mighty thunderings*, saying, Hallelujah!" And is not this what the waves always say, —*praise the Lord*—praise him with your voices, as we constantly do with ours, while we thus intelligibly proclaim aloud the might of his power and the glory of his majesty!

Pleasing is the variety of prospects which the sea, at different times, affords us. For, one while, like the conscience of a good man, calm and unruffled, it reflects a bright and beautiful image of the light which shineth upon it from above; at another, like the heart of the wicked, it is dark and cloudy, stormy and tempestuous, agitated from the very bottom, and its *restless waters cast up mire and dirt*. Reflect, for a moment, on these two pictures of virtue and vice; and then doubt, if you can, to which of the originals your choice ought to be directed.

To behold the ebbing and flowing of the tide, is an amusement ever new. By this contrivance of infinite wisdom (whatever second causes are employed to produce the effect), the whole mass of sea water is kept in continual motion, which, together with the salt contained in it,



preserves it from corrupting (as it would do, if stagnant) and poisoning the world. At one part of the day, therefore, the ocean seems to be leaving us, and going to other more favoured coasts: but, at the stated period, as if it had only paused to recover itself, it returns again by gradual advances, till it be arrived to its former height. There is an ebb and a flow in all human affairs; and a turn of events may render him happy who is now miserable. The vessel, which is stranded, may yet be borne up on the waters; may put out again to sea, and be blessed with a prosperous voyage.

Nor is the sea more wonderful in itself, than it is beneficial to mankind.

From its surface vapours are continually arising, drawn upwards by the heat of the sun, which, by degrees formed into clouds, drop fatness on our fields and gardens, causing even the wilderness to smile, and the valleys, covered over with corn, to laugh and sing. Thus the prayers of the faithful servants of God, daily ascending from all parts of the earth, return in large effusions of grace and blessing from heaven.

But we are indebted to the ocean not only for the vapours sent up from its surface, but likewise for many springs, which have their origin from the great deep beneath, with which the sea communicates. These, arising in vapour through the lower parts of the earth, break forth and issue in streams, many of which joined form rivers, and so go back again to the place from whence they came; as the blood, in the human body, flows, in streams from the heart, through the arteries, and returns to it again, in rivers, by the veins, which grow larger as they approach, and are about to empty themselves into the great reservoir. In the greater, as well as the lesser world, there is a constant circulation maintained. The income is proportioned to the expense, and nothing is wasted. *All rivers, saith Solomon, run to the sea, yet the sea is not full, or, does not overflow; to the place from whence the rivers come, thither do they return again;* but not till, by their innumerable turnings and windings, they have refreshed and enriched large tracts of country, in their passage. So divine grace springs up in the heart of a Christian man, as water doth in a fountain, supplied from an invisible and inexhaustible storehouse. It flows forth in his words and actions, doing good to all around it in its course, and is

finally swallowed up and lost in the boundless ocean of infinite perfection.

Barren and desolate as the sea appears to those who only look upon it, and search not into it, yet within its bosom are contained creatures, exceeding in number those that walk and creep upon the land; insomuch that in the sacred language, they have their name from a word which signifies to multiply. The ingenuity and industry of man have found means to draw forth these inhabitants of the waters from their deepest recesses. And while they afford to some an agreeable variety of wholesome food, they support multitudes of others, whose employment it is to procure them, an employment healthy, honest; carried on in peace and quietness; without tumult, noise, strife, and bloodshed; affording to those who are engaged in it, continual opportunities of beholding *the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep*. Persons of this occupation, men of plain sense and good hearts, were chosen by our blessed Lord, to preach the word of life to the nations, to cast abroad the evangelical net, and to become, as he himself expresses it, *Fishers of men*.

By the invention of shipping, and the art of navigation, the sea is made in reality to join those nations, which it appears to divide; the communication being often far more easy and expeditious by water, than it would have been by land. The riches of both the Indies are wafted to our shores; we sit at home, and feast upon the productions of every country under heaven; while the superfluity of our own commodities is disposed of, to advantage, abroad. A friendly intercourse is opened between the most distant lands. Savages are humanized, and become proficient in the arts and sciences. The gospel is preached among them, and the light of truth made to shine upon those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death. They are taught the art of arts, and the science of sciences; the art of holy living, and the science of salvation. A large vessel, with all its conveniences, constructed in such a manner as to go upon the surface of the water, and to brave the fury of winds and waves, is, perhaps, the masterpiece of human contrivance. And the psalmist, when contemplating the wonders of the ocean, cries out in admiration, as if placed in a situation like this of ours—*There go the ships*.

But while we meditate upon the advantages accruing to

mankind from a part of the creation, which, at first sight, might seem incapable of affording any, let us not be unmindful of the circumstance which brings us now together, and gives occasion to this discourse. Let the medicinal powers and salutary virtues with which the Almighty hath endued the waters of the sea, be always had in remembrance by those who have happily experienced them. Let praise and glory be rendered to the great Physician, who hath made the ocean a magnificent mineral bath, in which, as formerly in the pool of Bethesda, the weak become strong, and the sick whole. And when we behold the mighty works thus wrought for the bodies of men, let us reflect upon that sovereign mercy, which, in like manner, strengthens the infirmities, and heals the diseases of our minds; and let us be equally diligent in using the means appointed to restore *them* to vigour and purity; that so, thus doubly benefited and blessed, we may express the gratitude of our hearts in those divine words of David—*Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities. Who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and mercy. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy life is renewed like the eagle.*

The last use I shall mention which we are to make of the sea, is that which the Holy Spirit himself hath so frequently made of it in the scriptures, viz. to consider it as an emblem of the world, and of what is passing therein. Under a smiling deceitful surface, both conceal dangerous rocks and quicksands, on which the unskilful mariner will strike and be lost. Both abound with creatures pursuing and devouring each other, the small and weak becoming a prey to the great and powerful; while in both there is a grand *destroyer*, a *Leviathan*, taking his pastime, and seeking the perdition of all. In the voyage of life, we may set out with a still sea, and a fair sky; but ere long, cares and sorrows, troubles and afflictions, overtake us. At God's word, either to punish us, or to prove us, from some quarter or other, whence perhaps we least expected it, the stormy wind ariseth, and lifteth up the waves. We are carried sometimes up to heaven with hope, sometimes down to the deep with despair, and our soul melteth because of trouble. Then it is, that

our heavenly Father shows us, what poor helpless creatures we are without him ; and tribulation becomes the parent of devotion. If we cry unto the Lord in our trouble, he will deliver us out of our distress. If, with the disciples in the gospel, we go to our Master, saying, *Lord, save us, we perish*, he will, as he did then, arise, and rebuke the winds and the sea ; there will be a calm, and we shall arrive in safety at the desired haven. Let us, therefore, conclude, by beseeching Almighty God, in the words of our most excellent church, that we, who by baptism were “ received into the ark of Christ’s church, being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that finally we may come to the land of everlasting life,” where all the tossings and agitations of human affairs shall cease ; or, as St. John expresses it, where there shall be “ no more SEA.”

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## DISCOURSE XXXI.

### THE BLESSING OF A CHEERFUL HEART.

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*A merry heart doth good like a medicine.*—Prov. xvii. 22.

AMONG the golden maxims delivered out, for the direction of our moral conduct, by him, on whom it pleased God to bestow “ largeness of heart as the sand upon the sea shore,” we meet with several, in different parts of the book of Proverbs, to the same effect with that which hath been just now read.—“ Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop ; but a good word maketh it glad. A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance ; but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. All the days of the afflicted are evil ; but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. A merry heart doth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” To these passages may be subjoined a very fine one from the book of Ecclesiasticus, written in the spirit and style of Solomon—“ Give not over thy mind to heaviness, and afflict not thyself in thine own counsel. The gladness



of the heart is the life of man, and the joyfulness of a man prolongeth his days. Love thine own soul, and comfort thine heart, remove sorrow far from thee: for sorrow hath killed many, and there is no profit therein. Envy and wrath shorten the life, and carefulness bringeth age before the time.”\*

It is evidently intended, in these sentences, to discountenance a gloomy, discontented cast of mind; and to recommend, in its stead, that habit of being pleased ourselves, and of pleasing others, which is best expressed, in English, by the word *cheerfulness*: I say *habit*, because herein it stands distinguished from those transient flashes of merriment, which are often succeeded by an answerable depression of spirits; and are therefore, by our author, in another place, compared to “the crackling of thorns under a pot;” they blaze for a moment, and expire for ever; whereas cheerfulness is even and constant; though it blaze less, it warms more, and has been very properly called the sunshine of life.

The obligations we lie under to cultivate this happy temper of mind, affect us, some, as we are *men*; others, as we are *Christians*.

The first argument in favour of cheerfulness shall be drawn from the eminent service it is capable of rendering to the *body*. What powers the soul will possess, or how she will exert them, in a separate state, we cannot tell. During her union with the body, she makes use of it as an instrument, and is therefore much concerned to keep it in order, that her own operations may not be impeded. To do this, she cannot take a more effectual way, than to establish and preserve in herself a cheerful disposition. The influence which the mind hath upon the body is well known; inso-much that the writers upon health and long life never fail to take the *passions* into consideration, of which, they tell us, that the more sudden and violent ones produce acute diseases, and the slow and lasting ones those which are styled chronical. Among these latter, it is certain, that no one is more prejudicial to the health of the body than grief, when long indulged, and settled into a habit, whatever may have been its cause, great or little, real or imaginary. It contracts and enfeebles the animal spirits, preys upon the strength, and eats out the vigour of the constitution; the

\* Eccles. xxx. 21.

radical moisture is consumed, and the unhappy subject of this passion droops like a flower in the scorching heat of summer. "A broken spirit," says Solomon, in the words following those of the text, "drieth the bones." And what is worst of all, it prevents the good effects of those medicines, which it renders necessary. On the other hand, a cheerful disposition of mind always seconds the endeavours of the physician for the service of the body, and will do half the work in the cure of a distemper. It dilates and invigorates the animal spirits, quickens the fluids, repairs the solids, and maketh the bones fat. Such extensive influence, in the little world of man, as well as in the larger one of creation, do the superior parts exert upon those which are inferior. Let "the heavens rejoice," and "the earth will be glad." He, therefore, who would enjoy health while he lives, and live long to enjoy it, must learn to be cheerful.

Nor, secondly, does cheerfulness bear an aspect less friendly on the *mind* itself, which by melancholy is dejected and broken, and becomes unfit for the performance of its functions. Under the dominion of such a temper, a man finds himself unable to bear up against the evils of life, or to taste its blessings, poured in ever so great a profusion around him. He cannot be a partaker of the light which shineth upon others, but walketh on still in darkness. "All his days are evil." The duties of his station are unperformed; he can neither be of service to his brethren, nor help himself. His judgment is perplexed and confounded; it is difficult for him to make a resolution, and still more so to keep it. His imagination is haunted with fears and terrors; his memory serves only to recal the ideas which feed and increase the disorder; and he becomes a burden to himself, and to his friends. But how grievous and pitiable a case is this? Perhaps there are few cases more so in the world. Losses and calamities, pain and sickness, may be, and often are supported, without any great difficulty or inconvenience, by a sound and vigorous mind. But when the supporter itself falls, and covers the ground with its ruins, then the desolation is complete. "The spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Would we then avoid so sad a catastrophe? We must shun the steps that lead to it. Would we be easy in our thoughts, and masters of ourselves; would we escape from the tyranny

of the most pernicious of passions; would we possess a clear imagination, an undisturbed judgment, and an unruffled temper; would we perform all the social offices with alacrity and pleasure; would we relish the comforts of life, and not feel the weight of its troubles; would we, in a word, enjoy serenity and complacency of mind ourselves, and diffuse them around us, wherever we go! All these are the privileges of cheerfulness and unanswerable reasons why we should cultivate that disposition in our own hearts, and press the necessity of so doing on all our acquaintance.

A third argument in favour of cheerfulness, may be deduced from a survey of the *world* in which we live, and in which we find things framed not only for necessity, but pleasure; not only for use, but beauty. The lights which God hath “set in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day from the night, to be for signs, and for seasons, for days, and for years,” while they answer all these purposes, according to his ordinance, do, at the same time, cheer and delight us by their splendid appearance. The blossoms of the spring, which serve to protect the infant fruit; the glories of summer, which mature and bring it to perfection; and the riches with which autumn overspreads the face of a country, contribute as much to the satisfaction of the beholder, as they do to the husbandman’s advantage. The same genial power which brings food out of the earth for the nourishment of the animals that walk upon it, arrays it in a colour the most agreeable and refreshing to the eye of man. And let any one, who walks forth, at the proper season of the year, to contemplate the creation in its beauty; who beholds the brightness of the sun, the clearness of the sky, the verdure of the earth, well watered pastures clothed with flocks, valleys covered over with corn, and woods resounding with the music of birds; let such an one determine (to use the words of an elegant and pious writer upon the subject), “whether Providence designed, this world should be filled with murmurs and repinings, or that the heart of man should be involved in gloom and melancholy.”\* Certainly the psalmist was of another opinion, whose description of the pleasing objects, with which nature abounds, may supply their absence, and make them present to our minds:—“He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the

\* Spectator.

hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of heaven have their habitation, and sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." A survey of creation drove away all sadness from the heart of David, and filled it with admiration, joy, and gladness.—"O Lord," says he, "how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!—I will sing unto the Lord, as long as I live; I will sing praise unto my God, while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." A resolution, so just and well founded, suggesteth to us a fourth argument on the behalf of a cheerful disposition of mind, as it is a duty we owe to our *Maker*, who hath placed us in a world thus stocked with objects, capable of inspiring complacency and delight. For it was, doubtless, his intention, that, by contemplating the beauties and glories of the creation, we might be led to make suitable returns of gratitude and thankfulness to the Creator. But gloom and melancholy will never suffer emotions like these to arise in a mind, of which they have taken possession. Such a temper, therefore, when it is become a fixed and settled one, appears not only to be to the last degree inconvenient and tormenting, but to have a manifest tincture of impiety. To receive the gifts of heaven with a sour aspect and a sullen silence, what is it but to throw them back, with disdain, to the bountiful Donor, declaring, that we will have none of them? It is the rebellious obstinacy of a wayward child, against the gracious offers of the most indulgent of fathers. Whereas, a cheerful state of mind (to use the words of the excellent writer before cited) is "a constant habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature; an implicit praise and thanksgiving to Providence under all its dispensations; a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the divine will in its conduct toward man. The cheerfulness of heart which springs up in us from the survey of nature's works, is an admirable preparation for gratitude. The mind



has gone a great way toward praise and thanksgiving, that is filled with such a secret gladness. A grateful reflection on the Supreme Cause who produces it, sanctifies it in the soul, and gives it its proper value; consecrates every field and wood, and turns an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice.”\*

Such are the obligations to cultivate a cheerful disposition, which affect us as *men*, wishing to possess a sound *mind* in a healthful *body*; to taste the beauties and excellencies of the *world* in which we are placed; and to make a due return of gratitude and thankfulness to *God* who placed us in it. Let us now consider the additional motives afforded us, as *Christians*, by the religion we profess.

The nature of that religion is sufficiently expressed by the term so often used to denote it. It is a communication of *good news*, which should be received, in this case, as in all others, with a joy proportionable to its importance; and as it is of the highest importance, should be therefore productive of the greatest joy. The patriarchs and prophets, who viewed afar off that wonderful event which hath since taken place, were affected by it in a very sensible and lively manner.—“Your father Abraham,” says our Lord to the Jews, “*rejoiced* to see my day, and he saw it, and was *glad*.” Isaiah is in raptures whenever he has occasion to touch upon the subject—“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!—Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people. Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.” When the predictions were accomplished, and the divine person, who had been the subject of them, made his appearance in the flesh, the heavenly messenger published the news in the following terms:—“Behold, I bring you good tidings of *great joy*, which shall be to all people.” The gospel was accordingly received by the first converts on the day of Pentecost, “with gladness and singleness of heart.” Into whatsoever city or country it came, “there was great joy in that place;” and the joy, we find, was such, that it raised its possessors above the world, and triumphed

over all afflictions. Of other things they were often despoiled; but "their joy no man took from them." In every situation and condition they did then what the apostle exhorts all Christians to do; they "rejoiced evermore."

Nor can we wonder, that the gospel should, in its name and nature, portend joy, when we reflect, that its *end* was to deliver mankind from sorrow. Sorrow first entered into the world, as a necessary attendant on sin, which filled the minds of men with disquietude and anxiety, their bodies with diseases and pains. The gospel removes the former by the pardon it holds forth, and enables us cheerfully to bear the latter, by the grace it confers. God therefore represents himself in it, as "the God of love, and of all consolation." Our Lord calls us to him, that he may "give us rest and refreshment;" that he may "wipe all tears from our eyes;" that we may "enter into our Master's joy;" and that "our joy may be full." For this purpose he has sent us a blessed "Comforter, to abide with us for ever," whose first fruits are, "love, joy, and peace;" a spirit, cheerful in himself, and making those cheerful, who are partakers of him; cheerful in trouble, cheerful out of trouble; cheerful while they live, cheerful when they die; cheerful in using well the blessings of this life, cheerful in expecting the blessedness of the next; cheerful through faith, while they believe in the great and precious promises made to them; cheerful through hope, which depends upon their accomplishment; cheerful through charity, in doing acts of mercy and loving-kindness; till they come to that land of plenty, where none shall want; to those regions of joy, from whence sorrow shall be forever excluded.

There is no occasion to be more particular upon this topic. It appears evidently, that, whether we consider the name, the nature, or the end of the gospel, its Author, its doctrines, its duties, or the spirit which accompanies it; every way, it is a dispensation of love and peace, consolation and joy. So that a good Christian, of all men, has most cause to be cheerful. Some have gone so far as to affirm, that it is impious in such an one to be otherwise.

A celebrated writer on the side of scepticism and irreligion, in a book published, since his death, to recommend atheism to the world, has been pleased to say, that all the devout persons he had ever seen were melancholy. This

might very possibly be; for, in the first place, it is most likely that he saw very few, his friends and acquaintance being of another sort; and, secondly, the sight of *him* would make a devout person melancholy at any time.

But it may be said, How can these things be? Doth not the gospel call us to repentance? And is not repentance attended by mourning? Are we not commanded to renounce the world, and to mortify the flesh; to abstain from jollity and pleasure; to deny ourselves, to fast, to watch, and to pray? How then can such a religion as this be a source of cheerfulness and joy?

It is most certainly true, that the gospel calleth us to repentance; and it is equally true, that repentance is attended by mourning. But is this the fault of religion, or of the sinner? Of the sinner, surely, who by his conduct makes repentance necessary, and then is angry to find that it is not agreeable. Physic is seldom so; and he, who has contracted a disease, must submit to the remedy, if he would recover his health. But the fact is, that true penitents have never failed to declare, they felt a greater joy in the midst of their sorrow, through a comfortable sense of God's returning favour, than ever they did in the commission of their sin, which was sure to be followed, if it were not accompanied, by the stings and terrors of conscience.

As to the world and the flesh, jollity and pleasure, if we are bidden to renounce, to mortify, and to abstain from them, it is by way of friendly caution, lest they should endanger the health of our minds, and bring on a relapse. They are taken from us by the kind hand of our heavenly Father, that something more wholesome, and more truly delightful, may be communicated to us, and relished by us.—“Be not drunk with wine,” says the apostle, “but be filled with the Spirit.” And he who makes the exchange, can be no loser by it. In a word, there is infinitely more joy in subduing a passion, than there can be in gratifying it; and, if we are to be determined by experienced persons, who have fairly tried both, they tell us, the pleasures of sin are far inferior to those afforded even by the severest and most unpromising exercises of religion. The objection therefore, when considered and answered, turns out (as all objections in the end do) to the advantage of the gospel, which resembles a fine country in the spring season, where the very *hedges* are in bloom, and

every *thorn* produces a flower. The joys of the world end in sorrow; but the sorrows of religion terminate in joy.—“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” And it is very observable, that our Lord enjoins his disciples not to appear abroad with a sour and gloomy countenance, but, in their converse with mankind, to preserve their usual cheerfulness, even at those seasons, when they are exercising upon themselves any act of religious discipline.—“When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

Such, then, are the motives for cultivating a cheerful disposition, which reason dictates to us as men, and religion prescribes to us as Christians. You would wish perhaps to know, by what means this happy temper may be acquired, and preserved.

We have before had occasion to mention the influence which the mind hath on the body. It is necessary here to take notice of the influence which the body sometimes hath on the mind, and to observe, that melancholy is not infrequently constitutional, taking its rise from some distemperature of the blood and juices. This has, perhaps, a share in the production and increase of what is called *religious*, but should rather be called *irreligious* melancholy, much oftener than is generally imagined. That the effect, therefore, may cease, the cause must be removed, and application must be made to the physician, rather than to the divine.

When this is not the case, but the disorder lies originally in the mind, many useful directions may be given for its removal. Three things more especially are to be avoided by him who would possess a cheerful spirit.

The first of these is *idleness*. The mind of man, being an active and restless principle, must have some matter given it to work upon, or it will turn its force inward, and prey upon itself. When grief proceeds from a real cause, and not from one that is imaginary, it admits of no remedy more expeditious and efficacious, than that of diverting the thoughts from the subject which occasioned it, by providing for them some other employment; as we are told of a famous Roman



general, who had lost his son, that he found a cure for his sorrow, in the heat and hurry of war.\* And it is obvious to observe, that the sedentary and inactive, they who are retired from business, or they who were never engaged in any, are the persons that suffer most by the incursions of melancholy, from which, they themselves will tell us, they have never failed to be relieved, as often as, by any extraordinary call, they have been roused from indolence, and forced upon action. The malady which destroys so many constitutions, and makes such numbers miserable who have nothing else to make them so, is unknown to him, whom necessity obliges to toil for his bread. With the sun he rises, full of life and vigour, to his appointed task. Upon that his attention is engaged all day, and the performance of it secures to him an uninterrupted repose at night, according to Solomon's observation:—"The sleep of a *labouring* man is sweet." From all which we may venture to conclude, that happiness consists in employment, and that to be idle is to be wretched.

A second thing to be avoided is *guilt*. We must not only be employed, but we must be well employed. To every station Providence has annexed its proper offices and duties. We shall always find the discharge of these to be one source of cheerfulness, and the consciousness of having discharged them will always furnish us with another. They are pleasant not only in the act, but in the remembrance. They are labours, which will have their reward from the hand of our Master in heaven. They are labours, which will end in rest eternal, and will make that rest to be sweet indeed. But what title can that man have to cheerfulness, who has done those things only which he ought not to have done? Guilt and cheerfulness cannot dwell under the same roof. It is not fit they should. The consequence of guilt unrepented and unexpiated, is the wrath of God. And he on whom the wrath of God abideth, has no reason to be cheerful. It is folly, it is madness in him to be so, as it must argue an utter ignorance and insensibility of his condition. The psalmist tells us, that "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart;" and therefore he adds—"Rejoice

\* Agricola—"In luctu bellum inter remedia erat." Tacit. in Vitâ. See the first lines of a Poem styled "The Library," printed for Dodsley, 1781.

in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

A third thing to be avoided, as capable of for ever excluding cheerfulness from the breast in which it has fixed its residence, is *infidelity*. Take from man the expectation of another world, and you render him at once the most miserable creature in this, as having, by his superior ingenuity, contrived for himself a great variety of racks and tortures, to which all other animals are strangers. Present cares and present calamities would fall heavy upon us indeed, were they not sweetened and alleviated by the prospect of future joys. So delightful did the glimpse of such a prospect appear to the great Roman orator, that he declared, if it were a delusion, he desired and had determined to live and die under it.\* Who among us could be cheerful, while he entertained the thought either of not being at all after death, which must be the atheist's lot, if his system be true; or of being for ever miserable, which will be his case, if his system should be false? On a person of this cast, it should seem needless to inflict any other punishment, than that of leaving him to the horrors of his gloomy imagination, till he feel himself to want those joys and comforts, of which he hath laboured to deprive others.

Upon the whole—May it not be questioned, whether there be not some degree of infidelity at the bottom of most of that anxiety and disquietude, which is so much complained of under the sun? For why do we grieve and lament that things are as they are? Why do we murmur and repine at what has happened? Why do we muse and disturb ourselves about what may happen? Is it not all from want of faith? Did we but attend to the instructions of this heavenly guide, she would teach us, that it is God who governs the world; that he governs it in wisdom and righteousness; and that therefore it is but reasonable, we should leave the government of it to him; that he who hath showed his love toward us in the greatest instance of all, will not withhold it in others; that he who hath given his Son to die for us, will not deny us any thing which will contribute to our real welfare; and that we may safely cast all our care upon him, who will make all things in the end work together for good to them that trust in him. These considerations, were they but rendered

\* Cicero de Senectute, ad fin.

habitual to our minds, and ready for constant use and application, would brighten the darkest scenes of human life, and cause solicitude and despondency to fly away. Religion would then gain by its professors that credit and honour which it deserves, and the designs of heaven would be fully answered, which most undoubtedly were, that innocence and cheerfulness should go together, and the best Christian be the happiest man.

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THE VERSES REFERRED TO IN PAGE 355, FROM A POEM STYLED  
"THE LIBRARY."

WHEN the sad soul, by care and grief oppress'd,  
Looks round the world, but looks in vain, for rest;  
When every object that appears in view  
Partakes her gloom, and seems afflicted too;  
Where shall affliction from itself retire?  
Where fade away, and placidly expire?  
Alas! we fly to silent scenes in vain,  
Care blasts the honours of the flow'ry plain,  
He veils in clouds the sun's meridian beam,  
Sighs through the grove, and murmurs in the stream:  
For when the soul is labouring in despair,  
In vain the body breathes a purer air;  
No storm-tost sailor sighs for *slumbering* seas,  
He dreads the tempest, but invokes the *breeze*;  
On the smooth mirror of the deep resides  
Reflected woe, and o'er unruffled tides  
The ghost of every former danger glides.  
Thus in the calms of life we only see  
A steadier image of our misery;  
But lively gales, and gently clouded skies,  
Disperse the sad reflections as they rise;  
And busy thoughts, and little cares, prevail,  
To ease the mind, when rest and reason fail.  
When the dull thought, by no designs employ'd,  
Dwells on the past, or suffer'd or enjoy'd,  
We bleed anew in ev'ry former grief,  
And joys departed furnish no relief.

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## DISCOURSE XXXII.

## THE DUTY OF PRAYING FOR GOVERNORS.

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*I exhort that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.—1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.*

AN exhortation from an apostle always merits attention; but more especially, when he himself assures us, that the subject of it is not of an inferior or secondary nature.—“I exhort that, first of all”—The person exhorting is St. Paul. the duty to which he exhorts is a capital and leading article. It is the duty of intercession to be made by all men for all men, to manifest the love we bear for one another, as members of Him, who, at the right hand of God, ever liveth to make intercession for the whole race of mankind.—Our prayers are united with his, and by him offered to the Father; his merits, like the cloud of sweet incense from the altar, ascending with them, to render them effectual. Effectual, in some manner, they must be, when rightly made; otherwise, we should not have been exhorted to make them. The salutary influence produced on our own minds by a performance of the duty, has been sometimes assigned as the only reason for its being enjoined. That influence is great and salutary indeed, seeing it is impossible we should long bear ill will to those, whom in our prayers we beseech God to bless with every kind of blessing in time and eternity. It is an excellent method, therefore, of softening the temper, and inducing a mild, merciful, and forgiving disposition in the person interceding. But to say that no benefit accrues to the person or persons for whom intercession is made, what is it but to contradict the whole tenor of scripture, which shows us in so many instances the regard vouchsafed by heaven to the prayers of men, and the favours granted in consequence of them. It is necessary for us to settle ourselves firmly in the belief of this point, because no man will persevere in doing that which he apprehends himself to do



to no purpose. As to the manner in which the diving Being orders and adjusts his various dispensations, we can no more comprehend it, than a fly on one of the columns of the building in which we are now assembled, can comprehend the magnificence of the whole, or the proportion of the several parts. He will certainly perform that which he has promised: how he will perform it, is a consideration which belongs to him, and not to us. Proceed we, therefore, to the immediate subject of the day, namely, the duty of making intercession for kings, and for all that are in authority. The reasons on which this duty is founded shall be considered, as they respect God; as they respect those who govern; and as they respect those who are governed.

I. As they respect God, it would indeed be sufficient, that he has enjoined the duty, even though we could assign no other reason. There is no danger lest He should be too absolute. Whenever he commands, we have nothing to do, but to obey; and we shall always find our account in it. — “This” — says the apostle in the words immediately following the words of the text — “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;” of God, who is our Saviour, or of our Saviour, who is God; for it holds either way. But what are we, sinful men, thy unworthy servants, O Lord, that we should be sufficient to do any thing that is good and acceptable in thy sight? What are we, if, when thou art graciously pleased to say so, we should either refuse or neglect to do it?

But there is a very obvious reason why this is deemed good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. It is an acknowledgment of his providence, his power, and his goodness; of his providence, as superintending and directing the affairs of men; of his power, as being able to protect, preserve, and prosper those for whom our prayers are preferred; and of his goodness, as being willing so to protect, to preserve, and to prosper them. What the act of intercession thus implies, is expressed, with wonderful sublimity, in the daily collect for the king, when we style God, “our Lord and heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only ruler of princes, who does from his throne behold all the dwellers upon earth;” and, therefore, “beseech him with his favour to behold our most gracious sovereign lord,” who reigns over us. This is

a noble confession of the unlimited extent, the undoubted superiority, of divine Providence; a powerful argument for confidence, that we shall obtain the petitions we ask; and as powerful an argument against impeding the success of our prayers, by sinning at any time in his presence, "who from his throne does thus behold all the dwellers upon earth." If God be on our right hand, we should suffer ourselves to be neither seduced nor terrified.

There is yet another consideration to be urged in the case before us. When we entreat the Almighty, that he would protect and preserve government amongst us, we entreat him to protect and preserve that, which is his own appointment, and by all good and conscientious men is to be obeyed as such. All power is originally and essentially in God; from him it descends to man. Pontius Pilate, about to pass sentence on the innocent Jesus, was not making a due use of his power; but even then, that power was by the innocent Jesus recognized and allowed.—"Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." Accordingly, by our apostle we are told, "There is no power but of God; the powers that be"—the powers subsisting—"are ordained of God." So far as relates to the different modes by which, in different constitutions, rulers become invested with their power—so far government is, what St. Peter styles it, "an ordinance of man," regulated by human laws. But when, by rulers becoming so invested, government commences, and is in force, it must be submitted to "for the Lord's sake;" not only through fear of punishment, but because God, who is the great King over all the earth, has commanded us, for the peace of the world, and the comfort of society, to consider our governors as armed with his authority, and to be subject to them as to himself. Resistance to them will be accounted as resistance to him.

These are the plain and simple politics of the Bible; easily understood, but, like many other duties, when we are aggrieved, or fancy ourselves to be aggrieved, not so easily practised. The bias of human nature, in its present state, does not draw toward obedience. A late historian, who believed equally in the Bible and the Alcoran, has observed, that no harm can arise from the circumstance of this doctrine being preached by the ministers of the gospel; because whenever the proper time for rebellion, in any nation, comes,

the people will always find it out, without being told. The only danger is, lest they should rebel too soon, before that time arrive. We give him credit for the observation; nothing can be more certain. Let not the most sanguine advocate for liberty, who dreams constantly of the subversion of the constitution, and, in the visions of the night, beholds his prince becoming absolute, and preparing to ruin and murder all his subjects—let not such an one, I say, be under any apprehensions, that all the preaching in the church will prevent faction in the state: there will always be found a sufficient proportion of it: nor let any man be offended, if we now repeat our position, that the consideration of government being God's appointment, affords a very solid reason why “prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks, should be made for kings, and for all that are in authority.”

II. Other reasons will offer themselves respecting rulers, and the situation in which they are placed.

If we are to make intercession, we are to make it chiefly for those who stand most in need of it; for those, who in this life have the largest share of temptations and of troubles.

Now, who upon earth is exposed to so many and powerful temptations as a king? Has he a propensity to the pleasures of sense? They are all at his command: they stand around him, only waiting for his call, to return answer, “Here we are.” Has avarice taken possession of his breast? It may be gratified by amassing treasures, instead of expending them in generous and noble donations. Is he disposed to pride? He has every thing the world can furnish to puff him up. Does ambition fire him to aggrandize himself at the expense of his neighbours; to seize that to which he has no right; to desolate whole countries, and deluge them with the blood of the inhabitants? The instruments of destruction are prepared; fleets and armies move when the word is given. In short, does either appetite or passion at any time excite him to do that which he ought not to do? The means are at hand, and there are always those who will flatter and encourage him in following his inclination.

But suppose him manfully to resist these temptations; and now let us view that sea of troubles, which threatens to overwhelm him in the discharge of his office. He must feel, day and night, the weight of that office, the various duties to be

performed, and the difficulty, nay, almost impossibility, of performing them all, in any tolerable manner. Deceived by others in matters concerning which he cannot inform himself, or see them with his own eyes, he finds he has done wrong, when his whole intention was to do right; and perhaps, bestowed his favours on worthlessness and profligacy, when he designed to reward virtue and merit. Exposed continually to the shock of parties contending, ostensibly, for the public good, but, in reality, for places of honour and emolument, he knows not, at length, whom to trust or employ; nor must he trust and employ those whom he would wish to trust and employ; but is often under the necessity of discarding men whom he loves, and taking to his bosom, men whom he cannot love. In the mean time, a set of libertine, unprincipled writers in prose and verse, are ready to exhibit him to his people as a monster, to misrepresent and traduce his best actions, to aggravate his errors, and treat him in a manner in which he himself would disdain to treat the beggar at his gate.—Is a person thus circumstanced an object of envy? No: if there be any bowels of love and mercy, pity and pray for him, that God would grant him patience in suffering evil, and perseverance in doing good, to the end of his days.

This all of us may do; and this is all that most of us can do. By intercession with heaven, there is a communion opened of the greatest with the least; and to the prayers of the meanest and remotest subject of the empire, who knows him only by name when he prays for him, may the sovereign stand indebted for some part of the favour and prosperity vouchsafed him, who needs the prayers of his people, because the cares and toils of business will often scarcely allow him time and composure of mind to pray for himself.

III. But it is not only a regard to our rulers which suggests reasons why we should pray for them. A regard to ourselves should operate no less. Our own interest is deeply concerned.—“I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for kings, and for all that are in authority.” Why!—“That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty;” a “quiet and peaceable life,” as citizens; “in all godliness and honesty,” as Christians.

“A quiet and peaceable life!”—What a blessing! in-



volving in it all other blessings. Without quiet and peace, what can we pursue with pleasure, or enjoy with comfort? The scriptures paint it under the lovely and affecting image of "every man sitting under his own vine, and under his own fig tree." "Sitting"—a posture of perfect ease and security—"under his own vine"—something that he can call his own, guarded and insured to him by the laws and government of his country. Without laws, and government to carry those laws into execution, there would be nothing that he could call his own. His next neighbour, who had a mind for it, and was stronger than he, must have it, and with it the life of the proprietor offering to defend it. The weak must be a prey to the strong, and the honest man be ruined by the villain, without redress or remedy. We of this nation (blessed be our God for it) know not what it is to see government overturned by war from abroad, or insurrection at home. For years together have we been enabled to sit composedly in our habitations, and read accounts of what other countries have suffered in this way. Warm and comfortable within, we have heard the storm rage and howl around us without, waiting only for the return of a clear sky and the sun, to open our doors, and go forth again. This has rendered us insensible of the felicity we enjoy, because we have never been deprived of it; and men are ready in the wantonness of their folly, upon every trifling occasion, while serving the interests of themselves and their friends, to shake the foundations of the government under which they live, never reflecting on the calamities which must light upon all, were the fabric to fall in the contest. But the States of America can tell what they have suffered: the States of Holland can tell what they expected to suffer: the inhabitants in some parts of a neighbouring kingdom can inform us (in the midst of a civilized and enlightened age) what it is to have the flesh torn from their bones, or be buried alive in the earth. Of these and other transactions we now sit and read (as was observed above) with perfect calmness. But suppose—God forbid that the supposition should ever be realized; it is made, that it never may be realized—Suppose, I say, they should come home to ourselves.

More than a century has passed, since this nation experienced the miseries of anarchy and confusion; when unhappy dissensions afforded opportunity for a crafty and ambitious

upstart to murder the king, annihilate one house of parliament, and, having turned the members out of the other, walk unmolested to Whitehall, with the key of it in his pocket. This was LIBERTY, planted by able and skilful hands, duly watered and full blown! Great events from little causes! Who would have thought such an event could have happened, when the dispute first began? Who could believe it ever did happen, had we not incontrovertible evidence to prove it? Least of all, who would wish to see it, or any thing like it, happen again? Let not, then, the principles which produced it be adopted and disseminated amongst us: let not the governed be taught to esteem themselves superior to their governors; but let all be taught, as they “fear God,” to “honour the king;” that is, to “honour the king,” because they “fear God,” who has commanded them so to do. Our felicity depends on the safety of the prince, and the stability of government, which may fail, among other reasons, through our neglect to pray for them. Our ingratitude, ungodliness, and indevotion, as well as our other vices and crimes, may bring a blast on the designs of our rulers; and, while we blame the king and his ministers, the fault may be entirely our own.—“Let supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made, therefore, for kings and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life,” as citizens; and that we may lead it “in all godliness and honesty,” as Christians.

For if the state be disturbed, the church cannot remain in peace; among the blessings of which, this is ever to be esteemed the greatest, that religion is then best cultivated, and made to flourish in a land. Its ministers enjoy leisure and opportunity to celebrate its solemn offices, to meditate upon it, to write upon it, to preach, and to publish books upon it, for the edification of their people. Of all this, what can be done in the midst of war and tumults, when priests and people are flying before their common enemies, or engaged in civil commotions against each other? The Israelitish monarch, driven by rebellion from his capital, and in danger of his life, is very affecting upon this circumstance. The remembrance of better times occurred to his mind; of times, when he went in procession with the multitude, and led his subjects into the house of God, with the voice of praise and thanksgiving, among such as kept holy

day. A comparison of his former happy with his then afflicted condition almost broke his heart.—“When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.”—But faith came to his assistance, and bade him not despair the return of those happy times, when he should again visit the temple, in like manner as before.—“Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”

In a season of greater calamity and distress in our own country, this venerable cathedral, by the reformers of that period, was converted into a stable; and small indeed was the prospect of its ever being restored to its original use and beauty. But, by the divine mercy, we are now assembled in it, “with the voice of joy and praise, to keep holy day.” We have a church, and we have a king; and we must pray for the prosperity of the last, if we wish to retain the first. The levelling principle of the age extends throughout. A republic, the darling idol of many amongst us, would probably, as the taste now inclines, come attended by a religion without bishop, priest, or deacon; without service, or sacraments; without a Saviour to justify, or a Spirit to sanctify; in short, a classical religion, without adoration.

The external part of religion is, doubtless, of little value, in comparison with the internal; and so is the cask, in comparison with the wine contained in it: but if the cask be staved, the wine must perish. If there were no Sundays, or holy days, no ministers, no churches, or religious assemblies, no prayers, or sacraments, no scriptures read, or sermons preached, how long would there be any religion left in the world; and who would desire to live in a world where there was none? It is to enable the ministers of Christ to perform all these their functions, for the benefit of mankind, in peace and quietness, with due decency and dignity, that kings are by divine appointment constituted “nursing fathers” of the church, “and queens its nursing mothers;” nor is it more their duty, than it is their interest, to become such.

The church, it may be said, can subsist without the state, or under oppression and persecution from it. True: the Christian church so subsisted for three hundred years; but, in the mean time, its members of all denominations

were sought out, and put to death, with all the variety of tortures, which the ingenuity of men, actuated by the malignity of evil spirits, could devise. If it should ever seem good to God to bring us into a similar condition, he would, we trust, prepare us to endure it; but neither clergy nor laity, it is presumed, can regard such a condition as a desirable one. The Greek church subsists, at this day, at Constantinople, under the sceptre of Mahomet. But how does it subsist? Like the tree that had suffered excision, in the dream of the Chaldean monarch; its root, indeed, remains in the earth, with a band of iron and brass, and it is wet with the dew of heaven, until certain times shall have passed over it; at the expiration of which, it may come into remembrance before God, and again bud, and put forth its branches, and bear fruit, for the shadow and support of nations yet unknown. But, at present, its condition is certainly not to be envied, or coveted.

As Christians, let us therefore gratefully acknowledge the protection we receive. We are pilgrims, travelling through this world to another. The powers of the world must use us as they shall think proper, and it shall please God to permit them. Bad usage we are to bear with patience; for good usage it becomes us to be thankful. And if Israelites, when captives in Babylon, were enjoined by a prophet to pray for a heathen king, who had carried them into captivity, "that in his peace they might have peace;" how much more ought we to pray, in our own land, for our own prince, who adorns by his life the faith which by his office he stands engaged to defend; that so Christianity, which is the religion of peace, may thrive and flourish in the soil natural to it! Continue to us, then, O Lord, we beseech thee, Him whom thou hast hitherto preserved.—"Grant the king a long life:" bless him in his person, in his actions, in his family, and in his people: make his days prosperous; and the close of them, when it must come, honourable and comfortable; that, through thy grace and goodness, it may open for him an entrance into that kingdom, where only temptation shall cease, and trouble shall be known no more.

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## DISCOURSE XXXIII.

## THE DUTY OF SELF-DENIAL.

*Then saith Jesus to his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.*—Matt. xvi. 24.

“A hard saying; who can hear it? Has God, then, implanted appetites and affections in me, only that I may be at the trouble of crossing and mortifying them? Has he spread pleasures and delights before me, for no other end than that I may act the self-tormentor all my days, by abstaining from them? It is a conduct unreasonable in itself, and dishonourable to his nature. It cannot be. I will go back, and walk no more with the author of such a religion as this.”

Reflections like these will but too naturally arise in the uninstructed or the ill-instructed mind, when passages are read from the gospel (and many such passages there are) of a similar import with that which has been selected for the subject of our present meditations.—“To imagine (says a late philosopher) that the gratifying any of the senses, or the indulging any delicacy in meats, drinks, or apparel, is of itself a vice, can never enter into a head that is not disordered by the frenzies of a fanatical enthusiasm.” And we have seen the pen of a celebrated historian employed in representing the primitive Christians as a set of poor, moping, melancholy, miserable fanatics, because they observed the self-denying precepts of their Saviour, instead of adopting the “elegant mythology of the Greeks,” and the no less elegant manners of the Romans.

The matter, therefore, deserves a serious and diligent inquiry. The goodness of God forbids us to suppose that he would willingly grieve or afflict the children of men. Indeed, he himself assures us, that he never doth so. And he who has bestowed on man the faculty of reason, can issue no commands which are not founded on the highest and most perfect reason.—“He who formed the eye, shall he not

see?" It shall therefore be the design of the following Discourse to evince, that the divine wisdom shines not forth more conspicuously in any one precept of the gospel than in this, whereby a man is enjoined to **DENY HIMSELF**.

The point shall be argued from the nature of man; from the nature of religion; from the influence exerted by the body upon the soul; from the many instances of self-denial practised by the men of the world; and from the rewards annexed to the practice of it among Christians.

In the first place, then, be it assumed as a principle, that human nature is in a state of depravity and corruption. Man is not upright. His passions and affections do not naturally move in subordination to the higher principle within him, but are disposed to rebellion. There are in his constitution certain irregular desires; and evil propensities, which are continually breaking forth into action. In the multitude of newspapers daily published among us, there is not one but contains abundant evidence to satisfy the most sceptical mind in this particular.

For *this* reason it is, that self-denial is become, as it were, the form and substance of every virtue; for so far as we deny our natural corrupt tempers, so far we seem to advance in virtue. We are so far humble, for instance, as we deny ourselves in the instances of pride; so far heavenly minded, as we deny our earthly inclinations; so far charitable, as we deny our tempers of self-love and envy; so far temperate and pure, as we deny those appetites, which, if indulged, would render us otherwise; and thus every virtue seems to have its chief foundation in the denial of some corrupt temper of our nature. The matter lies in a narrow compass. Were we upright and perfect, virtue would consist in *following* our inclinations, because those inclinations would tend only to good; as we are fallen and depraved, virtue consists in *denying* our inclinations, because those inclinations tend often to evil.

Upon this principle it is, and because the depravity of our nature begins to show itself very early in operation, that children, as they cannot be made to understand the necessity of denying *themselves*, unless we would see them spoiled and ruined, must be denied by *others*, who are about them, their parents, or governors. Systems of education, however differing in other respects, all centred here, till, some years

ago, upon the continent, arose a genius, brilliant as a comet, but, like that, eccentric and portentous! who surprised the world by advancing, in substance and effect, the following propositions: - "That no kind of habits ought to be impressed on children: that you ought never to teach them obedience, as a duty: that you should leave them to the natural consequences of their own actions: and that, when reason comes to exert itself in a maturer state, all will be right." Should the experiment ever be tried in England, the event will only verify what has been predicted, in a beautiful apostrophe to the pupil of this new philosopher, by an elegant writer of our own—"EMILIUS! How I tremble for thee, while I see thee exposed to the care of thy too ingenious tutor! Fortunate wilt thou be, if thou reachest the end of thy fifth year! Nay, rather, fortunate wilt thou be, if those accidents, which must inevitably attend thy situation, deprive thee of a life destined to future misery from the ills of body and of mind, contracted through this early and continued indulgence of thy infant caprices! I see thee wilful to thy parents, domineering in the nursery; surfeiting on meats, bursting with liquids; inflaming thy body with noxious humours, thy mind with unquiet passions; running headlong into dangers which thou canst not foresee, and habits which thou canst not eradicate; mischievous to others, but fatal to thyself!"

In things of higher and more important concern, which respect not time but eternity, we are all in a situation too nearly resembling that of *Emilius*, unless placed under the discipline of a better tutor. That tutor must be religion; from the design of which shall be adduced a—

*Second argument in favour of self-denial.* Religion supposes the corruption of our nature, and is given to heal and restore it—a consideration, which will carry us a step farther into the nature of this evangelical duty. For the physician who undertakes to cure a disease, must of course, while he administers proper medicines, enjoin his patient to abstain from every thing (however pleasing and agreeable) which may, in any degree, counteract those medicines, and nourish the disease. The wisdom and the kindness of the physician are manifested by the injunction, whatever the sick man may, and, through ignorance, frowardness, and peevishness, probably will, think to the contrary. It is easy therefore to conceive, that many indulgences, though in themselves not,

strictly speaking, perhaps, *vicious* or *immoral*, may yet be prohibited, as dangerous, on account of the infirmity of our minds; for the same quantity of wine, which would be of no disservice to a person in health, might prove fatal to one in a fever. In this light human nature is considered (and surely with the utmost truth and propriety) by the gospel. We are fallen into a state of sin, and, being so fallen, we find ourselves in a fallen world, where, unless we are upon our guard, every thing around us will contribute to aggravate and inflame the distemper. Therefore are we, in *mercy*, commanded to abstain. Christ came to deliver us from this state of sin and death, and to restore us to all those tempers which may best prepare us for a state of glory, with immortal spirits, in another and a better world to come. Now, what are those tempers? Read the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, and see—Humility, meekness, mourning, purity, heavenly mindedness, righteousness, peace, patience, resignation, and joy in being counted worthy to suffer abuse, ridicule, and persecution, for our Saviour's sake. We must renounce our religion, or acknowledge the excellency of these tempers, and the necessity of their being formed in us, that our Redeemer may pronounce us *blessed*. If, therefore, we find ourselves engaged in any habits of life, in a course of any indulgences and enjoyments, any pleasures or diversions, which prevent the formation of these tempers in us, and tend to strengthen and confirm their opposites, in such instances it will undoubtedly be expedient to practise self-denial. When we return home in the evening, before we retire to our rest, let us sometimes, for the experiment's sake, only read over the twelve first verses of our Lord's sermon on the mount, and observe how our minds stand affected toward them. If at any time we are in doubt concerning a particular employment, or amusement, instead of inquiring nicely into the lawfulness of it, and whether there be in scripture any special prohibition of it, the shorter and safer way is, to ask oneself, whether it be agreeable to the general spirit of Christianity; whether it tend to beget and increase in us all the holy tempers of that divine religion, or to suppress and extinguish them?

To account for the strictness of the gospel precepts, and the manners of the first Christians, it is likewise to be observed, under this head, that if we would possess the power of self-



controul in things unlawful, we must sometimes exercise it in things lawful; as he who wishes to avoid a fall from a precipice, if he be a prudent man, will not venture too near the verge of it. The desires that have been suffered, upon all occasions, to *reach* the line which separates virtue from vice, will by a very small temptation be seduced to *pass* it. The Christian soldier, like all others, must be put under the discipline of war in the time of peace, or, when the hour of actual service arrives, he will be found greatly wanting. He who has accustomed himself to govern his thoughts and words, will easily govern his actions; and he who has learned at proper seasons to abstain, will find no difficulty in being temperate. It may be added, that he who has attained to temperance, has gone a great way toward the acquisition of many other virtues. This leads us to a—

*Third* reason upon which the doctrine of self-denial is founded, namely, the influence which the body exerts upon the soul. So great and extensive is this influence, that the fall of man seems to have consisted very much in the subjection of the soul to the power and dominion of the body; as the characteristic mark of his restoration through Christ is the reduction of the body under the power and dominion of the soul. For thus the scriptures describe the whole process as a contest between the *flesh* and the *spirit*, ending, after many struggles and vicissitudes, in the victory of the latter.—“The corruptible body (says the wise man) presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind.” It must be our endeavour, as it is both our interest and our duty, to take off, as much as may be, this *pressure*, and to diminish this *weight*. The body must have its supplies, or the soul will lose a good servant; but great care must be taken as to the quantity and quality of those supplies, or it will acquire a very bad master. He who fares sumptuously every day, and makes each meal a full and luxurious one, may, after any such meal, feel the force and energy of the above cited description;—“The corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind.” The heat and heaviness caused in the body by repletion, induce, for the time, an uneasiness and dulness on the soul; nay, what is more extraordinary, even vitiate and deprave its taste. The intellectual, moral, or spiritual truths, which, after the light repast of the morn-

ing, were relishing as the patriarch's savoury meat, are now become tasteless as the white of an egg. The man has contracted a temporary indifference, at least, if not an aversion, toward every thing that is wise, and great, and good. His faculties are not equal to any thing higher than a newspaper, or a novel, or a conversation more trifling than either; and a very few sentences in the religious way would infallibly send him to sleep. In short, there is not more difference between any two men, than between the same man, when full, and when fasting.

To say, with a celebrated physician, that no Englishman has an idea of temperance, would be saying too much: but we shall say no more than the truth, perhaps, when we say, that most of us are frequently wanting in many degrees of that self-denial which is so powerfully recommended and enforced upon us, by the preceding consideration, and which would conduce no less to the health and comfort of our bodies, than to the improvement and welfare of our minds.

The reciprocal influence of the soul and body on each other, has been largely demonstrated by modern philosophers; but they have been far too hasty in concluding from thence, that the soul, as well as the body, is material. There are arguments sufficient to evince them distinct beings, with different powers, though capable of exerting a mutual influence on each other. There is no absurdity in supposing them so to do. That they cannot exert such a mutual influence, allowing them to be distinct substances, is a negative, which never has been, nor ever can be proved. But an inference of great weight and importance to the conduct of mankind may be drawn from the circumstance of this reciprocal influence, namely, that we should labour, on the one hand, by temperance and abstinence, to preserve the body in that state which may produce a benign and kindly influence on the soul; and, on the other, to fill the soul with such ideas, sentiments, and affections, as may produce a like benign and kindly influence on the body. In general, the practice of mankind, alas, is exactly the reverse. They indulge passions in the soul, which destroy the health of the body; and introduce distempers into the body, which clog and obstruct the faculties of the soul.

But the difficulties and hardships to be encountered in a course of self-denial, it will still be said, perhaps, are very

discouraging. The objection may be in some measure obviated by a—

*Fourth* argument on its behalf, deduced from the examples frequently set us by the men of the world.

Our blessed Master has observed, that “the children of this world are in their generation *wiser* than the children of light.” It may be said, with equal truth, that they have generally more *zeal*, more *fortitude*, more *patience*, and *perseverance*. There is not a votary of wealth, pleasure, power, or fame, who cannot, and who does not, upon occasion, practise a self-denial, which few Christians can be prevailed upon to practise, in a much better cause; a self-denial more severe and rigid indeed, than *they* are often called upon to practise.

For the sake of collecting what is never to be used, and adding to his beloved heap, the miser will forego the comforts, the conveniences, and almost the necessities of existence, and voluntarily submit, all his days, to the penances and austerities of a mendicant.

The discipline of a life in fashion is by no means of the mildest kind; and it is common to meet with those, who complain of being worn down, and ready to sink under it. But how can they help it? What can they do? They are driven and compelled to it; they are fast bound by the adamant chains of a *necessity*—not *philosophical* indeed—but one equally inexorable and irresistible.

Consider the vigils and the abstinence of the gamester. To discharge with propriety the duties of his profession, it is expedient that he keep his habit cool, and his head clear. His diet is, therefore, almost as spare as that of St. John in the wilderness, and he drinks neither wine, nor strong drink; lest, instead of his cheating his friend, his friend should cheat him.

Consider the toil and the fatigue willingly undergone by one, whose delight is placed in the sports of the field, and the pleasures of the chase. How early does he rise! How late is he abroad!—In hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and rain. None of these things move him, neither counts he his life dear unto himself, being well content often to put it to the extremest hazard.

Look at the aspirant to power: he wears a countenance always suited to the present occasion. No symptom of inward

uneasiness is suffered to appear in it. He holds his passions in the most absolute subjection.—“Hitherto (says he to every one of them) shalt thou come, but no farther.” He takes patiently and cheerfully affronts and insults. He bears and forbears. Can the *Stoic*—can the inhabitant of *le Trappe* do more? Exemplary instances of mortification and self-denial are not confined to the desert, or to the cloister. They may be found in a court.

How often does the candidate for literary fame pursue his proposition, or his problem, or his system, regardless of food and rest, till his eyes fail, his nerves are shattered, his spirits are exhausted, and his health is gone! But greater things than these are still behind.

At the call of honour, a young man of family and fortune, accustomed to the gratifications of the table, and a life of ease and voluptuousness, quits every valuable and tender connexion at home, and submits at once to all the painful duties and hard fare of a camp, in an enemy's country. He travels through dreary swamps, and inhospitable forests, guided only by the track of savages. He traverses mountains, he passes and repasses rivers, and marches several hundred miles, with scarcely bread to eat, or change of raiment to put on. When night comes, he sleeps on the ground, or perhaps sleeps not at all; and at the dawn of day resumes his labour. At length, he is so fortunate as to find his enemy. He braves death, amid all the horrors of the field. He sees his companions fall around him. He is wounded, and carried into a tent, or laid in a waggon; where he is left to suffer pain and anguish, with the noise of destruction sounding in his ears. After some weeks, he recovers, and enters afresh upon duty. And does the Captain of thy salvation, O thou who stylest thyself the soldier and servant of Jesus Christ—does He require any thing like this at thy hands? Or canst thou deem him an austere Master, because thou art enjoined to live in sobriety and purity, to subdue a turbulent passion, to watch an hour sometimes unto prayer, or to miss a meal now and then, during the season of repentance and humiliation? Blush for shame, and hide thy face in the dust.

More strange and inexcusable still will this conduct of the Christian appear, when we consider, in the—

Fifth and last place, the rewards annexed to the practice of self-denial.



Many and great are its advantages in the present life. The lightness of spirits, the cheerfulness of heart, the serenity of temper, the alacrity of mind, the vigour of understanding, the obedience of the will, the freedom from bad desires, and the propensity to good ones, produced by a prudent and judicious abstinence, are inconceivable by those who have never experienced them, and fully justify to those who have experienced them the highest encomiums pronounced by the ancient fathers of the church on this evangelical precept, and the blessedness of observing it. For think not that the felicity, any more than the virtue, of man, consists in gratifying at all times his own humour, and following his own will; since his humour is perverse, and his will depraved. We are, in very deed, the oldest of us, children, wayward children; and, unless we would be miserable, as well as vicious, we must treat ourselves as we do our children. Now, “compare the child that is taught submission and obedience, with him that is humoured in every thing. How rational, cheerful, agreeable, and happy is the one! How ridiculous, peevish, disagreeable, and unhappy is the other! The smallest favour done the first, is received and acknowledged as a particular obligation: the greatest kindness done to the other, is either rejected with disdain, or received with thankless ill manners. The more you strive to please him, the more difficult he is to be pleased; till at length nothing will satisfy or oblige him, because he hath been obliged in all things. Betimes, therefore, accustom your desires, like children, to *disappointments*. Deny them every thing they ask for, that is *improper* for them to obtain; nay, every thing (be it what it may) which they ask for in an *improper manner*. This will be so far from souring the temper (as some have weakly suggested in the case of children), that it will give you, as well as them, a confirmed habit of acquiescing in what is right; of cheerfully submitting, when your wills are over-ruled; of receiving every thing with pleasure and gratitude, in which you are indulged; above all, of controuling every sudden passion that may arise; of commanding and moderating every desire; of resigning to the appointments of Providence, through every situation and period of life.” And if this be not happiness, say, where is it to be found, and where is the place thereof? It is the happiness of a hero, the joy and the glory of a

conqueror, returning from the field of battle triumphant, through grace, and dragging the enemies of his salvation fast bound to his chariot wheels. When self-denial has thus wrought its perfect work within you, the kingdom of heaven is there—and that kingdom is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

But self-denial will not only thus bring down heaven to you for a time—it will carry you up to heaven for ever. Let us revert to the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, and consider well the promises there made to those holy and happy tempers, peculiar to Christianity, the essence of all which is self-denial; and let us observe the manner in which the reward is adapted and appropriated to each several temper.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.”

The Saviour's promise is sufficient. But would you hear the testimony of one who viewed its accomplishment? You shall hear it.—

“I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes,

and made them white, in the blood of the Lamb." These are the "poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the afflicted, and the persecuted." These are they, who, in the days of their flesh, "denied themselves, took up their cross daily, and followed Jesus," in the way that leadeth unto life; that way, on which "the Lord hath promised his *blessing*, even life for evermore."

## DISCOURSE XXXIV.

### THE DUTY OF TAKING UP THE CROSS.

*If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow me.—Luke ix. 23.*

THAT instrument on which, among the Romans, malefactors were condemned to suffer an ignominious and painful death, became a sign or symbol of all that is afflicting or tormenting, vexatious or disagreeable, whether to the body or the mind of man. The utmost torture and anguish were expressed by the noun *cruciatu*s, the infliction of them by the verb *crucio*.

As the punishment alluded to was not in use among the Jews, they must have borrowed the expressions from the Romans; unless, as some learned men think, they had been received before from the Persians, who, it is said, were accustomed to fix criminals to some kind of cross. Such application of the word is common, I believe, to most of the modern languages of Europe. In our own, we denote all events adverse and displeasing by the general term of *crosses*.

Since the time when the Son of God, by suffering on the cross, for the sins of the world, exalted it to a dignity above the thrones and diadems of princes, on which it was soon portrayed as their greatest ornament and highest glory, the word became one of mighty import in the Christian system.

of which the doctrine, discipline, and duties, all range under its banner.

When our Lord pronounced the passage selected for my text, he, no doubt, intended to signify by what death he himself should die, and withal to intimate, that, besides the manifold persecutions his apostles were to undergo for his sake, some of them should even literally be conformed to him in the manner of their leaving the world; which accordingly came to pass. It seems impossible to reflect upon this wonderful and characteristic circumstance respecting the ever blessed Founder of our religion, as Grotius has well observed, without supposing that Plato must have been under a degree of divine impulse, when he closed the account of his righteous man, who should appear, at some future day, upon the earth, by predicting, that “after having suffered all other ills, he should, at length, be *fixed to a cross.*”

To understand the phrase of *taking up and bearing the cross*, it must be recollected, that, upon the infliction of this punishment, the criminal was obliged to *take up the cross*, and *bear it*, on his shoulders, to the place of execution.

Our Lord's declaration shall be considered, in the following Discourse, as general, and made to all his disciples. We shall state the grounds on which the duty is founded, and point out the manner in which it may best be performed.

It may appear difficult, at first sight, to comprehend the goodness of God in afflicting us, or commanding us to afflict ourselves. Could not he render us holy, without rendering us miserable, by way of preparative? Doubtless he could have done it; and he could have produced all men as he created the first man, at their full growth; but his wisdom has seen it fit, that we should pass through the pains and hazards of infancy and youth, in the latter instance; and, in the former, that through tribulation and affliction we should enter into his heavenly kingdom. It is his will; and, therefore, though no reasons could be assigned, silence and submission would best become us. But there are many.

For it is obvious to remark, in the first place, that Christianity did not bring afflictions into the world with it; it found them already there. The world is full of them. The misery of man is a theme on which philosophers and historians, orators and poets, have expatiated, from age to age; nor is it yet by any means exhausted. The wealthy



and the great, the men of business and the men of pleasure, have discovered no method of exemption. In every profession, every station, nay, in every individual, there is a something, which, at times, damps all enjoyments, and embitters the cup of life. Men are disquieted, either by the tempers of others, or their own; by their sins, or by their follies; by sickness of body, or sorrow of heart. Many, instead of becoming better by their sufferings, are made worse; they murmur, they rebel, they rage, they despair: and the torments of time lead on to those of eternity. Such is the state of things in the world. Let us reflect,—

Secondly, how it came to be so, and we shall find still less cause of complaint. The misery of man proceeded not originally from God; he brought it upon himself.—“God formed him upright;” and, while upright, happy; but he “sought out inventions,”—he followed his own imaginations, and became miserable. What the wise man says of death, is equally true of affliction;—“God made it not, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction,” or the suffering, “of the living. For he created all things, that they might have their being; and the generations of the world were healthful, and there was no poison of destruction in them, nor the kingdom of death upon the earth: for righteousness is immortal. But ungodly men, with their works and words, called it to them.” You see how exactly this harmonizes with the doctrine of the apostle; “Death”—and, in like manner, trouble—“came upon all men, for that all had sinned.” Whatever, therefore, our sufferings may be, we suffer no more than we deserve; we must bow down under the mighty hand of God; we must kiss the rod, exclaiming, in the words of Nehemiah, “Thou art just, O Lord, in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.”\*

The scriptures inform us, that by one man's transgression moral evil entered into the world; death, and every other kind of natural evil, entered with it. To find our way through all the mazes of that labyrinth of disputation which the subject has occasioned, may be difficult; to explain clearly, and unexceptionably, every particular in that concise history given us by Moses, may not be easy: but the

\* Nehem. ix. 33.

fact is sufficient, related in the Old Testament, acknowledged and built upon in the New. And it is the only clue that can unravel, the only key that can open every thing. Grasp it firmly, and suffer no man, either by fraud or force, to wrest it from you. Without it, all is dark and inexplicable. You will be driven, either to deny there can be a wise and gracious God who governs the world, which is the madness of the Epicureans; or, to affirm that evil is good, which is the absurdity of the Stoics.

But though it be most undoubtedly an absurdity to call evil good, there is no absurdity in holding, that good may be brought out of evil. Natural evil may be converted into a remedy for moral evil, which gave it birth. Sin produced sorrow; and sorrow may contribute, in some measure, to do away sin. That the crosses we meet, the pains and the troubles we suffer through life, are by the providence of God intended, and by his grace rendered effectual, for this purpose, shall be our—

Third observation; and I am confident it will give full satisfaction, and rest to your minds, as touching the matter in discussion.

From what we feel in ourselves, and what we see and hear of others, every person, who has thought at all upon the subject, must have been convinced, that, circumstanced as we are, “it is good for us to be afflicted.” Naturally, man is inclined to pride and wrath, to intemperance and impurity, to selfishness and worldly mindedness; desirous to acquire more, and unwilling to part with any thing. Before he can enter into the kingdom of heaven, he must become humble and meek, temperate and pure, disinterested and charitable, resigned, and prepared to part with all. The great instrument employed by heaven to bring about this change in him, is the cross. Affliction will make him humble and meek, by showing him how poor and weak a creature he is, and how little reason he has to be proud, or to be angry; it will render him temperate and pure, by withdrawing the fuel which has nourished and inflamed base lusts; it will cause him to become disinterested and charitable, as teaching him, by his own sufferings, to sympathize with his suffering brethren, and to grant that relief, which he perceives himself to want; he will die to the world, which is already dead to

him, and live to God, in whom alone he finds every blessing and comfort. Contented and resigned, he will have but one wish—"to depart, and to be with Christ."

Such is the process, which, at different times, and in different manners, must take place in us. The maladies to be healed are inveterate, and not without much difficulty eradicated. The process, therefore, must be long, and it must be painful; but there is good reason for it; the corruption of our nature makes it necessary, and is the real cause of the pain we endure in the operation. The surgeon applies not the knife where the flesh is sound; but when it is otherwise, the application must be made, and made in proportion to the depth of the wound, and the danger of a mortification. In such case, is it cruelty in him, when he cuts to the quick? No: it is affection, it is skill; it is the manner in which he would treat his only son. Does the father hate his child, whom he chastises? No: it is the best proof he can show of his love. So saith our heavenly Father of his children.—"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."\*

In this light, then, are we to view the troubles of life; not only those of the more notorious and heavier kind, as poverty and persecution, sickness, pain, and the loss of persons who are dearest to us; but those also, which are of less moment, and pass in secret, unobserved by the world; the little rubs and vexations arising from the ingratitude and froward dispositions of others, the conflict of passions in our own minds, or that languor, that *tædium vite*, as it is called, which destroys the relish of our enjoyments, and even of life itself. All these, which constitute the *daily* cross mentioned in the text, are designed to cure the surfeit of prosperity; to intimate, that earth is not the seat of unmingled and permanent happiness, that here we have no abiding city, but expect, and should seek after, one to come.

Nothing happens without the providence of God. Known unto him are all his works from the beginning. He created all, he governs all, and to every thing he has given to be what it is. He numbers the hairs of our heads, the leaves of the wood, the grains of sand upon the shore, and the drops

\* How finely is this touched by the hand of our great poet—

"Consideration, like an angel, came,  
And whipt th' offending Adam out of him."

that compose the mighty ocean; each atom, at the creation, was measured and weighed by his eternal wisdom. Acquainted with the state and temper of every person, and having the whole chain of events before him, he has prepared a series of them, to detach us, by degrees, from the world and from ourselves; to train us, by a holy and salutary discipline, for better things; to hew and to polish us, as precious stones, that shall have place in his celestial temple. And he has allotted to every man *his* cross, his own cross, that cross which is proper for him, and best calculated to effect in *him* so great and beneficent a purpose. Let him first consider what it is, and then "take it up, and bear it." To point out, in few words, the manner in which this may best be done, shall employ the remainder of our time.

When our Lord was led forth to be crucified, the Jews, we are told, laid hold on "one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country; and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." This stranger seems designed to appear, upon this occasion, as the representative of us all, exhibiting in his person, thus loaded with the cross, or a part of it, the very same instructions conveyed by our Lord himself in the words of the text:—"Let him take up his cross, and follow me." We are to follow him, to tread in his steps, and, conformed to his example in suffering, conform ourselves to it likewise in the manner of bearing those sufferings.

The very consideration, that we are following him, will direct us to do it as becomes us. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, going before us, and suffering so much for us, himself perfectly innocent, we cannot think it much, that we should suffer something, who are in so many ways guilty. "If these things be done to the green tree"—if the axe be laid to the root of the verdant and fruitful tree of life itself—"what shall be done to the dry?" What can the sapless and barren wood expect, but to be for burning and fuel of fire?

When a man groans under the iron rod of oppression, or, cast down upon the bed of sickness, feels his bones to be filled with pain, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain; when he endeavours to recollect some passage of scripture, wherewith to solace and support his weary soul; perhaps there is nothing that will cause more light and comfort to break in upon him, than frequently to repeat



and meditate upon that humble acknowledgment, made by the poor penitent from the cross on one side of his Saviour, and addressed to his reprobate companion on the other.—“Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but **THIS** man hath done nothing amiss.” At this thought, love of the Redeemer will spring up in his mind; and to love nothing is irksome; it will make “his yoke easy, and his burden light.”

In every path and every period of life, the cross will meet us: it will be found lying before us: by mean compliances, by transgressing or neglecting our duty, we may turn out of the road, and avoid it; through wilful blindness and obstinacy, we may stumble over it, and fall. Our Lord took up *his* and bore it while strength remained; let us do likewise.

It should be borne in a spirit of submission and resignation, without complaining or murmuring.—“Attend to the rod, and to him who hath appointed it;” consider well the latter, and you will entertain right ideas of the former.—“The cup which my *Father* hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—“Not *my* will, but *thine* be done.”

Resignation to God should be accompanied with meekness toward men, who may be the instruments of our sufferings—for they are only instruments, in the hands of their Maker and ours; and whether the instruments employed be animate or inanimate, a Christian sees it equally absurd to discharge his anger against them.—“Let him alone, let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse,”\* exclaimed David of Shimei. “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above,” said a greater than David to his unjust judge. Knowing this, therefore, “when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”† Spotless and silent, he was led, a lamb, to the slaughter.

Meekness is not at all incompatible with fortitude, which is necessary to carry us through, that we may not faint in our minds, and fail, before the end of our sufferings.—Behold the man! He comes forth with the purple robe, and the crown of thorns, into the midst of the hostile and furious

\* 2 Sam. xvi. 10.

† 1 Pet. ii. 23.

multitude, unmoved by the scoffs of apostate priests, and the insults of an infidel rabble; undaunted by all the efforts of evil men and evil spirits; unappalled at the sight of that cross, on which he was to "taste death for every man." He is mocked, spit upon, stripped, scourged, and nailed to the fatal tree. Patient and decided, firm and recollected, he commends his spirit to the Father, in words which recognized and substantiated an ancient prophecy concerning him; and then, as the last token of obedience, bows his head, and dies.

Charity is always glorious; but never appears more so, than when shining forth from a dark cloud of affliction; when it evinces, that our thoughts are not so engrossed by our own sufferings, as to forget those of others; when we are not unmindful to perform the last kind offices to those about us; when our latest breath is spent in comforting our relations and friends, and praying for our enemies. Thus the dying patriarchs of old called for their children, and left with them the monitions and benedictions of heaven: and thus He, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, to the women, who followed him wailing—"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children:" to the blessed virgin, and the beloved disciple, standing under the cross—"Woman, behold thy son—Behold thy mother:" of the Jews, who crucified him—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

These are the virtues, these the triumphs of the cross!

But perhaps you will ask,—“Who is sufficient for these things?” The answer received by St. Paul, applies to every one of us;—"My grace is sufficient for thee." *That* will enable us to look through "the sufferings of the present time," to the "glory that shall be revealed;" and to wonder that we make any account of the one, while we believe in the other. Faith shows us heaven opened, and Jesus, who was crucified, standing at the right hand of the Majesty there; it shows us a long and goodly train of those who once carried their crosses, but are "now crowned, and receive palms from the Son of God, whom they," formerly, *thus* "confessed in the world."

It is said of our blessed Lord himself, that "for the glory which was set before him, he endured the cross, despising

the shame," esteeming both the pain and the ignominy as nothing, in respect to the reward that should follow.

The misfortune is, that, in viewing these objects, we hold the glass, and turn the perspective: the joys of another world are driven off to a distance, and diminished; the evils of this are brought near, and magnified. How much otherwise do things appear in the sight of God! To us, one day may seem a thousand years: to him, "a thousand years are but as one day." A little more, or a little less, of pain or pleasure; a life longer or shorter, by a few years—are differences which disappear at once in the presence of eternity. Say, that, at some time within these last hundred years, two friends died, the one twenty years before the other. To the survivor, that interval seemed long and tedious: to us, now looking back upon the whole, it seems trifling; and more so to them: they are met again, and no trace of it is to be seen. A sick man, who passes a night without sleep, thinks that night to be without end; but the night, in reality, is no longer than another; and when it is gone, he himself will be convinced of it. Life rolls along like a torrent. The past is no more than a dream; the present, when we think we have fast hold of it, slips through our hands, and mingles with the past; and let us not vainly imagine, that the future will be of another quality; it will glide by, with the same rapidity. You have seen the waves of the ocean pressing each other to the shore. You then beheld an emblem of human life: days, months, and years, crowd forward, in like manner. Yet a little while, yet a few moments, and all will be at an end.—"The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

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## DISCOURSE XXXV.

## THE NECESSITY OF RISING WITH CHRIST.

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*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.—Col. iii. 1, 2.*

THERE are few persons who have not often employed their thoughts on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. The fact is extraordinary, and well attested; the circumstances striking and affecting. The trembling of the earth, the descent of the angel, the removal of the stone, the terror of the guard, and the different appearances of the Saviour to his disciples; all inspire a mixture of reverential awe, and heartfelt delight.

As a consequence of this resurrection, it naturally occurs to our minds, that since Christ is risen, we shall arise too; because he arose, that we might do the same. The members must be joined to the head; and the harvest will of course follow the first fruits.

This is clear. But there is another consequence, which perhaps may not so much and so frequently engage our attention as it ought to do.—“I know,” says Martha, speaking of her dead brother—“I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” We all can say this respecting our deceased friends and ourselves. We are ready to say it. But what is to become of us; what is likely to be our portion, when we shall have thus risen? For we may rise either to salvation, or to condemnation. To escape the one, and obtain the other, some work must be wrought, some change must be effected in us, before we die; which in scripture is likewise described as a resurrection. The apostle, you have heard in the text, addressing his Colossian converts in this style;—“If ye then be risen with Christ.” But how “risen with Christ?” They had not been dead, and, therefore, they could not have risen from the dead. *That resur-*



rection, the resurrection of the body, was not past; it was not to come for many ages: it is not yet come. The resurrection intended was to take place in persons that were living upon earth. This intermediate link of the chain we are but too apt to leave out in our calculations; or, at least, to think very slightly and sparingly of it, though it be indeed of the utmost importance. For what will it avail us to rise from the dead, only to hear the sentence—"Depart from me ye wicked?"

Often have we bestowed some reflections on the information communicated by the gospel of the day concerning that which has been done *for* us: let us at this time employ our meditations on the direction given us by the epistle, as touching that which is to be done *in* us. Let us take into consideration the *nature* of the change spoken of under the idea of a resurrection; the *evidence* of it in the transfer of our affections; and the *objects* on which those affections are to be placed.

I. "If ye then be risen with Christ"—The words evidently imply, that, in consequence of Christ's resurrection, some operation had been already wrought, some change had already passed upon the persons here addressed; an operation and a change, bearing some resemblance, some analogy to those which had been wrought and passed in the body of our Lord:—"If ye be RISEN with Christ;" if ye have risen from the dead, together with him. Now, since no such change had as yet passed on their bodies, the change intended must have passed upon the other part of their composition, their souls; *these* must, in some sense, have risen from the dead; previously to which, they must have been in a state of death, or they never could have risen from the dead.

The very mention of the words *dead*, and *death*, has, doubtless, already brought to your remembrance several passages in holy writ, where expressions of a like sort occur:—"You being dead in your sins; dead in trespasses and sins; she that liveth in pleasure is dead, while she liveth; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;" with many others.

Nothing can paint in stronger colours the nature of sin, than do these texts, which, by styling it *death*, lead us necessarily to conceive of the one by the other. The sinner, like

the dead man, neither sees, nor hears, nor tastes, nor feels, as he ought to do, were he alive to God, and had he his "senses exercised to discern good and evil:" he is incapable of motion and action, in a moral acceptation of the terms, that is, of making any progress toward heaven, or performing any good upon earth: "neither is there any breath in his mouth;" the Spirit of the Almighty has forsaken him, and he is become, as it were, a corpse, fit only to be carried forth, and laid in the pit of darkness and corruption. Such, in the sight of God, is the greatest, and the richest, and the gayest, and the wittiest, and the wisest man of the world, without religion; buried in sensuality and unbelief: he lieth in the grave, death gnaweth him, and the worm that never dieth is feeding upon him.

Now, to raise such an one from the dead, to restore him to life; to cause him to see the things which belong to his peace, the Sun of Righteousness, and the glories of his throne; to hear the words of eternal salvation; to taste the good things of the world to come; to feel the terrors of judgment, and the comforts of mercy; to inspire into him the breath of heaven, that he may speak in purity, in truth, and in charity, as "the Spirit gives him utterance;" to call him forth, like Lazarus in his grave-clothes, that he may walk in the way of God's commandments, and sit down at the table with his Lord—this is a work, which requires power more than human. Thus to rise *with* Christ, can be granted only *by* Christ.

And, indeed, to procure it, was the design of his exaltation on the cross:—"I, if I be lifted up, said he (signifying what death he should die), will draw all men unto me." The virtue of his death, and the consequent "power of his resurrection" (as the apostle styles it), compose a divine magnetical influence (if one may use the expression), which is to act upon the mass of mankind, and draw them upwards from the earth. It acts, in a due and appointed order, first upon their souls, and afterward upon their bodies. The soul, a native of heaven, had it continued pure and upright, as it came from the hands of the Creator, would still have looked and wished to return thither. But an alteration happened, which is wonderfully marked in that line of the heathen satyrist—

O CURVÆ in terras animæ, et cœlestium inanes!

The human mind has been warped from its original attitude, bent and bowed down to the love and care of earthly things, and rendered destitute of noble and heavenly thoughts and aims. This is the spiritual death of the scriptures, which has induced the necessity of a spiritual resurrection. And as the death of the body flowed from the same source of original transgression, a resurrection of *that* likewise must follow in due time.—“This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”\* By the union of body and soul, it was not intended, that the former should depress the latter, but that the latter should exalt the former. The resurrection of the one from sin to righteousness, is succeeded by that of the other from death to life eternal: and thus it is, that the Saviour completely fulfils his promise—“When I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.” That we should first “rise with Christ,” in the sense which has now, it is hoped, been sufficiently explained, is, you see, a necessary and leading point. We are next to consider the sign and proof of such our resurrection.

II. A change of this kind being of so much consequence, it must be a desirable thing for us to learn, on what evidence we may rest assured, that such a change has passed upon us. On this head we are instructed by the words following; for whether they be rendered, as our translators have rendered them, in the imperative—“Seek those things which are above,” or, as they may be rendered, in the indicative—“Ye do seek those things which are above,” it will come to the same. He who is risen with Christ, seeks, or ought to seek, the things which are above; it will be the effect, it will be the proof, of such his resurrection.

For to “seek,” or make search, implies,—

1. That a person is alive. A dead man, as he knows nothing, can desire nothing; and as he desires nothing, he can seek after nothing.

2. It implies, not only life, but motion, the sure sign and exertion of life. No one who is alive and awake, will continue motionless, as if he were dead: the same spirit which causes him to live, will excite him to move. When the apostle says, “In him (that is, in God) we live,” he adds immediately, “and move.” The Christian life is not a life

\* John vi. 40.

of indolence: *that*, if it be not death, is the way that leads to it. A true Christian is active and zealous, always thinking, speaking, or performing something for the honour of God, or the good of man. But,—

3. Seeking, or making search, if done as it should be, with a desire and resolution to *find*, implies more than mere motion and activity; it implies labour, diligence, perseverance. Nothing valuable is to be obtained without these, even in the present world; much less are the wonders and the rewards of eternity. It is possible to seek as Pilate did, who asked, “What is truth?” but never waited for an answer. We may seek carelessly; or begin well, and in a little time grow weary, and give over; or we may seek in a formal manner, without love of that which is sought; and therefore a search in earnest, and one that deserves the name, implies,—

4. A relish and affection for the thing sought, which cannot be possessed by a person who is dead. After that which we do not affect, we shall never long take the trouble to seek. Our apostle to the words, “Seek those things which are above,” subjoins, “Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” The Greek word here used for, “set your affections,” is one of very extensive meaning: “it comprehends the actions and operations both of the *understanding* and the *will*,” and cannot be fully translated by any one English word; *φρονεῖτε*,\* *sapite, understand, mind, relish, affect*, those things which are above. Wisdom, which is the mental faculty of rightly discerning and distinguishing between one thing and another, resembles that bodily sense residing in the palate, and perceiving the different taste and flavour of the various kinds of food; and it is very observable, that in the three languages of *Hebrew*, *Greek*, and *Latin*, the same term is used for both; חכם in the first, *φρονεῖν* in the second, *sapere* in the last.—“Set your affections on things which are above;” acquire such a knowledge of them, as may incite you to relish, to regard, to attend, to search after them more and more, as the objects of your love, desire, and affection. All this complication of meaning seems involved in the one word, *φρονεῖτε*. And, therefore, how diligent and industrious, how ardent and persevering ought we to be in the search thus enjoined by the

\* Leigh in Parkhurst.



apostle! Certainly the men of the world should never be suffered to outstrip and put us to the blush, by their pursuits after honour, pleasure, or wealth. Beautiful is the exhortation of the wise man: which each person may regard, as if addressed to himself:—"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee: so that thou incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as forbidden treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."\*

We shall be greatly quickened in this our search, if we consider the apostle's account of the things to be sought, or the objects of our search, namely, "the things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

III. To be exalted above others in place and power upon earth, is the too general wish of all. From the parabolical discourse of Jotham, we learn, that even the bramble was not exempt from it. And during the abode of Christ upon earth, we read of one, who desired for her two sons, that they might sit, one on the right hand, the other on the left, in his temporal kingdom, which was then imagined to be near its establishment. Such, however, was not the nature of our Lord's kingdom, or of the promotion to be obtained in it. He himself is seated at the right hand; but it is "the right hand of the Majesty in the *heavens*;" thither must his disciples look for their exaltation. We may say of the Creator, in a more elevated sense than that intended by the Latin poet,—

Os homini *sublime* dedit, *cælumque* tueri  
Jussit—

This is a holy ambition, to which no bounds need to be set; worthy a princely progeny, a royal race, the sons of God, those eagles, that can ascend the heights of the sky, and contemplate the brightness of the meridian sun—"Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Our Lord, or Redeemer, the object of all our hope, and all our delight, "is not *here*; he is risen; he is gone up on high;" he is upon his throne; he "sitteth at the right hand of God."

The attitude denotes *rest*; the place, *honour*. And what can we wish for more than these?

\* Prov. xi. 1, 2.

The attitude, that of *sitting*, denotes *rest*. Such it was to our blessed Lord himself. His life on earth was a life of labour; he looked not for rest till his labours were at an end. His days were passed in going about to do good among men; his nights, in thinking of them, and praying for them: often, indeed, he "had not where to lay his head." By taking our nature upon him, he submitted to its inconveniences and troubles, its sorrows and its pains: he laboured, and then he rested from his labours.

In time we shall do the same: but the time is not yet. The sad effects and consequences of sin are still in the world, and lie heavy upon it.—"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;" and we groan and travail with it: we ourselves, though redeemed by Christ, and favoured with his grace, that we may be enabled to support our miseries; we have, and upon earth ever shall have, miseries to support, and those miseries increasing, as we draw nearer to our dissolution. All things are full of labour and sorrow, without us, and within us: without are the incessant toils of life, the hurry and the bustle of the world; within are cares and fears: business fatigues mankind much; but when they have no business, they suffer more from their own thoughts. Their pursuits are often vanity, their disappointments produce vexation; and from the consideration of both, how many daily become a prey to gloom and melancholy!

On these, and many other accounts, which need not be mentioned (for experience will too soon teach the youngest among you), the state of a Christian in this life is by the scriptures represented under that of a mariner in a tempest, longing for a sight of the haven; of a soldier in camp, desiring to hear of peace, and to receive a final discharge from his warfare; of a labourer, bearing in the field the burden and heat of the day, waiting impatiently for the cool and comfortable evening, which shall release him, and send him home to quiet and repose. Hence the great object pointed out to us is *rest*: we are directed to consider, and derive consolation and encouragement, during our labours, from the consideration of that rest of God himself, after his work of creation; that of his people in Canaan, after their sojournings in the wilderness; and that of Christ, after his toilsome life, and painful death. We are assured, there still

*remaineth a rest*, the fulness and accomplishment of all others, for the people of God in heaven, when their labours likewise shall have been terminated upon earth. And we hear, under both Testaments, the aspirations of holy persons after it, complaining that they dwell with Mesekh; that their sojournings are prolonged; praying for the wings of a dove, that they may fly away to it; desiring to depart, and to be with Christ; weary of things, even the best things, below; and seeking earnestly the things above, where he *sitteth*.

Let us not, however, when we think of this rest, think of it as a mere negative state, as a state of dull sleep and insensibility. It is a rest attended with pleasure; the rest of a weary flock, in green pastures, beside the waters of comfort; Eden blooms anew, with its tree and its rivers; the Lamb leads his followers to living fountains of waters—of waters flowing from the throne of God, and consequently impregnated with all the blessings and glories of eternity.

I say *glories*, as well as blessings; for as the attitude in which our Lord is described by the apostle, that of *sitting*, denotes *rest*; by the place, “the right hand of God,” is denoted *honour*: the former promises the blessings of his peace; the latter, the glories of his kingdom.

Rest and honour, among men, are not often companions. Disquietude attends height of character, rank, and station, both in the pursuit, lest it should not be attained, and in the possession, lest it should be lost again. But of the honour which cometh from God this cannot be said. It is always bestowed on the penitent, the humble, and the faithful servant of his heavenly Master; and when bestowed, can no more be taken from him. The crown is immortal as the donor of it.—“When the breath of man,” on which depends all sublunary fame, “goeth forth, he turneth again to his earth; and then, all his thoughts”—those of the giver, as well as those of the receiver—“perish. Blessed therefore is he,” and he only, “who hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord, his God.”

To describe the blessings of rest and peace in the kingdom of our Lord, images are borrowed from the scenes of rural and pastoral life. To give us ideas of its glories, its majesty and magnificence—a throne is set in heaven, encompassed by a rainbow; and one is seen upon it, like a jasper or a

sardine ; seven lamps burn before it ; lightnings and thunders proceed from it : four and twenty venerable personages appear clothed in white ; they rise from their seats, and fall prostrate at the foot of the throne ; when a chorus is heard of all creatures, both in heaven and earth, singing glory to the Lamb triumphant ! Elsewhere, a city is exhibited, New Jerusalem, built of gold and precious stones ; that is, in the prophetic language of *Isaiah*, its walls salvation, and its gates praise ; the Lord God and the Lamb constitute its temple ; from whence it is illuminated by a splendour, far exceeding, and rendering needless, the light of the sun and of the moon ; the streets resounding with the hallelujahs of its blest inhabitants.

These are some of “the things above,” on which the apostle exhorts us to “set our affections.” I am sure, you all think them worthy of your very best and warmest affections. May the consideration of them produce that effect, which a *due* consideration of them *must* produce. May they who have neglected to seek them—if any such there be—now begin to seek them ; and they who have always sought them, now seek them still more ; thus receiving in themselves this most comfortable testimony, that they are “risen with Christ ;” that their bodies, at the appointed time, shall arise ; and both body and soul ascend to heaven after him, that “where he is, they may be also.”

## DISCOURSE XXXVI.

### THE CHRISTIAN RACE.

*So run, that ye may obtain.*—1 Cor. ix. 24.

**M**OST important was the *matter* by the apostles communicated to the world ; the heavenly reward, and the way to obtain it. The *manner* of communication well deserves your notice and attention. It is not done in the dry didactic style. There is nothing dull and heavy. All is spirit, and



all is life. Their ideas are clothed in such figures, as at once convince the understanding, strike the imagination, warm the heart, and excite the affections. It is impossible to continue cold and indifferent, while we read their epistles. They look around on the various scenes of life, and the customs that prevail among those to whom they write. From these they select images calculated to convey with effect to the minds of their disciples, the doctrines which they wish to impress.

The most splendid solemnities which ancient history hath transmitted to us, were the Olympic games. Historians, orators, and poets, abound with references to them; and their sublimest imagery is borrowed from these renowned exercises. The games were solemnized every fifth year by an infinite concourse of people from almost all parts of the world. They were observed with the greatest pomp and magnificence: hecatombs of victims were slain in honour of the heathen deities, and Elis was a scene of universal festivity and joy. We find that the most formidable and opulent sovereigns of those times were competitors for the Olympic crown. We see the kings of Macedon, the tyrants of Sicily, the princes of Asia Minor, and, at last, the lords of imperial Rome and emperors of the world, entering their names among the candidates, and contending for the envied palm; judging their felicity completed, and the career of all human glory and greatness happily terminated, if they could but interweave the Olympic garland with the laurels they had purchased in the fields of war.”\*

No subject could be more familiar than this was to the minds of the Corinthians, who were, besides, so often spectators of similar games, celebrated upon the Isthmus on which their city was situated, and from thence denominated *Isthmian*. With the greatest propriety therefore, the verse, of which my text is a part, is introduced by the words, *Know ye not*—“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.” For every citizen in Corinth was perfectly acquainted with each minute circumstance of the solemnity; a solemnity every way so splendid and pompous, that there was no danger lest the allusions made to it in this and other

\* Dr. Harwood’s “Introduction to the Study and Knowledge of the New Testament,” vol. ii.

parts of the apostolical writings, should appear low and degrading. To unfold and display to you the truths and duties enveloped in such allusions, shall be the business of the following discourse, in the prosecution of which I shall be often obliged, and therefore here make my acknowledgments, once for all, to the afore-cited ingenious writer.

Let us therefore observe, in the first place, that the comparison evidently intimates the Christian life to be a state of action, of strenuous, unremitted, unwearied action.

The candidates, who were to engage in the *stadium*, were brought to the barrier. There, duly arranged, they waited in all the excesses of ardour and impatience, for the signal. When it was made, at once they sprung forward, and it is natural to imagine, with what rapidity they would urge their course, and stretch every nerve to reach the goal.

How finely does this circumstance illustrate that sublime passage in the Epistle to the Philippians\*—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark." *Τα μὲν ὀπίσω ἐπιλανθανομενος, τοῖς δὲ ἐμπροσθεν ἐπὶ σκοποῦ διώκω, ἐπὶ τὸ βραβεῖον.* Every term here employed by the apostle is *agonistical*; and the whole passage beautifully represents that ardour which fired the combatants, when engaged in the race.

Thus again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews—"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *τον προκειμενον ἡμῖν ἀγωνα.*" Like those who ran in the Grecian stadium, let us urge our course, with unremitting ardour, toward the destined happy goal.

Once more, in the second Epistle to Timothy, ch. iv. 5. 7.—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; *τον ἀγωνα τον καλον ἡγωνισμαι, τον δρομον τετελεκα.*"

Life then is a contest, a conflict, a race, a progress from one degree of wisdom and goodness to another; from the virtues of childhood to those of youth; from the virtues of youth to those of manhood; from the virtues of manhood to those of old age; even till, at the near prospect of our dis-

\* Chap. iii. 12—14.

solution, we can say, each of us, with the apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course." We must seek for rest and repose only in the arms of victory. While the race lasts, it is not a time to slumber and sleep, to loiter and be idle. Our competitors will pass us, and we shall lose all. Forgetting what is behind, we must still, still press forward, applying to ourselves in one case, what was said of a great commander in another,—

Nil actum reputans, si quid supereset agendum.

Day by day we should improve; day by day we should examine ourselves, whether we have improved; what additional knowledge we have acquired, what additional good we have done: how we have performed our duty to our neighbour, to ourselves, to God that created and redeemed us, in public and in private. Upon these reviews, if carefully and faithfully made, how often should we find occasion to exclaim with that emperor, who, as a poet of our own observes, had been one without his crown, *Amici, diem perdidit!*

The grand object, in short, under this head, is to warn you against the curse (and there cannot be a greater) of doing nothing; against the encroachments of that most fruitless and wretched of vices, *indolence*, whose reign, when once established, is generally for life; and the lamentable condition of whose unhappy votaries is thus described in a vision, by an elegant and masterly pen.

"There were some whose crime it was, rather to neglect reason than to disobey her; and who retreated from the heat and tumult of the way, not to the bowers of intemperance, but to the maze of indolence. They had this peculiarity in their condition, that they were always in sight of the road, always wishing to return, and always resolving to return to morrow. In these, was most eminently conspicuous, the subtlety of habit, who hung imperceptible shackles upon them, and was every moment leading them farther from the road, which they always imagined they had the power of reaching. They wandered on from one double of the labyrinth to another, with the chains of habit hanging secretly upon them, till, as they advanced, the flowers grew paler, and the scents fainter. They proceeded in their dreary march, without pleasure in their progress, yet without

power to return; and had this aggravation above all others, that they were criminal, but not delighted. The drunkard, for a time, laughed over his wine; the ambitious man triumphed in the miscarriage of his rival; but the captives of indolence had neither superiority nor merriment. Discontent lowered in their looks, and sadness hovered round their shades; yet they crawled on, reluctant and gloomy, till they arrived at the depth of the recess, varied only with poppies and nightshade, where the dominion of indolence terminates, and the hopeless wanderer is delivered up to melancholy: the chains of habit are rivetted for ever; and melancholy, having tortured her prisoner for a time, consigns him at last to the cruelty of despair."—But let us arise and go hence; let us leave the shocking scene; let us never forget that the Christian life is a state of activity, that we are to strive, to run; and let us proceed to consider, in the—

*Second* place, the qualifications necessary for our success, the discipline that must fit us for the race, that must enable us to go through it with vigour, and to finish it with joy.

It was indispensably necessary, that the candidates in the Grecian stadium should previously submit to a severe regimen, and preparatory exercises, regulated and directed by a number of illustrious persons, appointed daily to superintend them. Many passages from the ancient writers will occur to your memories. That of Epictetus, perhaps, is most full and in point.—“You would conquer at the Olympic games—You must conform to rules; submit to a diet, refrain from dainties; exercise your body, whether you choose it or not, at a stated hour, in heat and cold. In a word, you must give yourself up to your master, as to a physician.”\* Thus the body was to be purified and lightened by strict temperance, braced by exercise, hardened by being inured to the changes of the atmosphere; when the day came, the aspirant was to be freed from such garments as might encumber or entangle him; and to observe the laws and rules recited by the herald before the games began.

To us who are engaged in the Christian race, St. Paul applies the first of these particulars in the words immediately following those of my text—“So run, that ye may obtain.” If any ask, how, and in what manner?—“He that

\* Epict. Arrian. iii, 15.



striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things." The apostle strengthens his precept by proposing his own example;—"I, therefore, so run, not as uncertainly"—*οὐκ ὡς ἀδηλως*—not as one unprepared to distinguish himself in public, as one preluding only in private, not yet trained and fitted for the conflict:—"So fight I, not as one that beateth the air," in a previous fictitious combat with mine own shadow; "but I keep under my body," *υπωπιαζω*, contundo, sugillo, I deal blows in earnest, that do execution; "and bring it into subjection," *δουλαγωγω*, lead it captive with all its appetites, obedient to my better part, my mind; and all this I do, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others," *ἀλλοις κηρυξας*, proclaimed to others the laws and the rewards, like the herald at the Olympic games,—“I myself should be a castaway”—*ἀδοκιμος*, disapproved; be rejected as unworthy; come off without honour and approbation.

Nothing can be stronger or more forcible upon the subject than this passage.—“He that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.” Otherwise, he will never strive long, or to any purpose, in the conflicts to which he is exposed. At all times, and in all circumstances, “the corruptible body, in some degree, presseth down the soul;” how much more, when itself is oppressed with a load of meats and drinks! The time lost, by sitting too long at the table, is matter of some consideration; but this is not all: the mind becomes indisposed toward any rational, manly, noble employment, for many hours afterward; perhaps, till the fumes of an intemperate meal shall have been carried off by a night’s rest. When we are told that “the people sat down to eat and to drink,” the next information we receive concerning them is, that they “rose up to play;” to something trifling and frivolous, at best; but, probably, to something much worse; to something base and vicious, intemperance having awakened every other corrupt appetite and evil passion dormant in the heart of man. Daily experience evinces the truth of what is here advanced. There is no person who has not often perceived and lamented the difference he has found in himself, when cool and sprightly at one part of the day, and when heated and stupified at another. Believe it, and let it sink deep in your minds—“He that striveth for the mastery,” either as an academic,

or a Christian, either in the prosecution of learning, or his advancement in religion, if he wishes to succeed, "must be temperate in all things." It was not more necessary for a candidate in the Grecian games to be so, than it is for him. And if an apostle of our Lord, one not a whit behind the chief of them, with all his gifts and graces, thought that, without a strict and constant adherence to this discipline, he was not safe, but, after converting the nations, might himself be lost; what are we, that we expect by any other means to secure our salvation? You have heard the words of the disciple; let me subjoin those of the Master—"Beware, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged," βαρυθωσιν, made heavy, weighed down, "with surfeiting and drunkenness," κραιπαλη και μεθη, too much eating, and too much drinking; "and so, that day," the day of death, and of judgment, come upon you unawares."\*

Nor is it less expedient that we should be duly and regularly exercised in every species of good works, and inured to bear with equanimity, and without inconvenience, the change of fortune and situation; that so, when called forth at the hour of trial, we may be found ready and expert at the fittest and best methods of doing the one, and undergoing the other.—"Herein (says St. Paul) do I exercise myself," ασκω, "to have always a conscience void of offence."† And he gives this advice to young Timothy;—"Exercise thyself," γυμναζε σεαυτον, "unto godliness."‡ And, respecting the patient endurance of change—"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, that strengtheneth me."§ Great and illustrious champion! Well wast thou prepared to enter the lists, and to run thy race! Trained by thy holy instructions and example, and aided by the same Saviour, may we be enabled, at an humble distance, to follow thee, and to do likewise!

In order to this, we must remember to cast away every impediment, as the competitors in the games did.—"Let us lay aside every weight (says the apostle), and the sin

\* Luke xxi. 34.

† 1 Tim. iv. 7.

† Acts xxiv. 16.

§ Phil. iv. 11.

which doth so easily beset us,"\* *ευπεριστατον*, *that entangles by wrapping round*, as the long and troublesome garments of the Greeks, unless thrown off, would entangle and impede their steps, and prove the fatal cause of losing the victory. What it is that encumbers and entangles him in his Christian course, there is no man but may soon learn, if he will but make an honest and diligent inquiry. And whatever it may be that does so encumber and entangle him, however near, and however dear, it must be parted with: and it is well worth his while to part with it. He will find himself abundantly recompensed by the freedom and alacrity, the cheerfulness and joy, with which he will afterward proceed; by the delightful and permanent frame of mind, in which he may apply to himself that passage of the psalmist;—"I will run the way of thy commandments, for thou hast set my heart at liberty."

Nothing now remains, but, in running the race, duly to observe the laws and rules prescribed for the conduct of it. "If a man strive for masteries (they are the words of St. Paul to Timothy), he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully,"† *νομικως*, according to the laws and rules. He must aim at the right mark, he must run within the appointed limits, and he must behave fairly and honourably to his competitors. Of these laws and rules the apostles have been the heralds, to proclaim and make them known. From their writings, and from primitive tradition, the church of England has framed her institutions; in conformity to which, our University has enacted her statutes, so far as they concern religion and morals. But other objects, alas, are too often in the view, other pursuits too often engage the attention of our young men; and, instead of encouraging one another in the right way, too often they corrupt and seduce one another into those ways that are not right. The more is the pity! O that occasion were not thus given for the mouths of our adversaries to be opened, for their tongues and their pens to be sharpened, as they are, against us!—Let us agree to wipe off, without delay, the reproach that has been fastened upon us, by performing our duty to God and man, upon a liberal and generous principle; by "running the race that is set before us," without the whips and goads of pains and penalties, for his sake "who loved us,

\* Heb. xii. 1.

† 2 Tim. ii. 5.

and gave himself for us." And for the encouragement of all to quit those courses which are wrong, to enter upon and persevere in that which alone is right, let us turn our thoughts, in the—

*Third*, and last place, to the prize held forth as the reward of the contest, and that circle of spectators, who are the witnesses of it, and of our behaviour under it.

To excite the emulation of the competitors in the Olympic games, by placing in their view the object of their ambition, the crowns appointed for the victors were laid upon a tripod, or table, which, during the celebrity, was brought out, and placed in the middle of the *stadium*.

Taking this idea with us, how just and noble do those expressions appear—"I press forward toward the mark," *σκοπον*, the goal, "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

But the circumstance most striking in this part of the comparison, is the mighty difference between the crowns bestowed upon the conquerors in the Grecian games, and that reserved in store for them who shall finally overcome in the Christian race. St. Paul has made the observation, and founded an unanswerable argument upon it, why we should not suffer ourselves to be exceeded by them in the severity of our preparatory discipline, or the vigour of our exertions in the course.—"They do it (says he) to obtain a corruptible crown; but we, an incorruptible,"\* *αφθαρτον*. And St. Peter speaks of "a crown of glory that fadeth not away;" *αμαρανθινον*, immortal, ever blooming—a fine contrast to poor fading withering crowns of wild olive and parsley, for of these were the Olympian and Isthmian garlands composed.

The sacred writers have exhausted the powers of human language in describing the reward which awaits the triumphant Christian. The riches of heaven, the honour which cometh from God only, and the pleasures at his right hand; the absence of all evil, the presence and enjoyment of all good; and this good enduring to eternity; never more to be

\* 1 Cor. ix. 25.



taken from us; never more to be in any the least degree diminished, but for ever increasing—these are the wreaths which form the contexture of that crown held forth to our hopes. And is not such a crown worth contending for? Shall we not with cheerfulness and alacrity endure some hardships to obtain it? Surely, if by our words or our deeds, we say, No, the Grecians, who endured so many, for so very trifling a consideration, must rise up in the judgment against us, and condemn us.

It may perhaps be alleged, that they saw the reward plainly before them, and that we do not. With our bodily eyes we do not. But a truth, confirmed to be such by sufficient authority, is, to all the intents and purposes of life, equally the object of our assent, of our firm trust and reliance, equally the ground of action, with what we see. Founded on its proper evidence, faith, like the dying martyr, “sees heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;” sees those who are already crowned, and “have received palms from the Son of God, whom they confessed in the world.” They compose a splendid and awful circle, beholding from the heights to which their Redeemer’s favour has exalted them, the conflict in which we are still engaged below, interesting themselves in our success, encouraging us to strive, and to persevere, as they did, in the days of their flesh.

Conformably to this idea, and alluding to that prodigious assembly from all parts of the earth, convened at Olympia, to be spectators of the game; before whom the candidates contended, having in view those venerable personages, from whose hands they were to receive the palm, and who were immediate witnesses of their respective conduct and merit—alluding, I say, to these circumstances, St. Paul, in the 12th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, places the Christian combatant in the midst of a most august and magnificent theatre, filled with all those great and illustrious characters, enumerated in the preceding chapter, as having overcome, through the power of faith, from the beginning of the world; whose presence should animate and fire him to engage in the contest, with an ambition not to be reprehended, and a spirit altogether invincible.

You will give me leave to conclude with the passage,

every expression of which you are now prepared to taste and feel, in its full force and energy.

“Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For, consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds;” think of the hard and bitter conflict, through which he passed; reflect upon his fortitude, and the promise of his grace, and be no more languid and dispirited.—“Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way;” exert in the Christian race those nerves that have been relaxed, and collect those spirits which have been depressed and dejected: make a smooth and even path for your steps, and remove the impediments which would obstruct and retard your course. In all the particulars that have been mentioned, and every other—if there be any other—SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN.

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## DISCOURSE XXXVII.

### THE CHRISTIAN ARMOUR.

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*Put on the whole armour of God.*—Eph. vi. 11.

IN the foregoing parts of the epistle, St. Paul had enforced the duties resulting from the various relations of life. These are easily stated, but, as all sadly experience, not so easily performed. An opposition often arises within, excited by our own passions; and there are still more formidable enemies, who attack us from without; endeavouring either to prevent us from forming proper resolutions, or from carrying

them into execution, when formed. Engaged as we are—necessarily engaged—in this perilous warfare, what is to be done? We are weak; how shall we become strong? We are without armour, either to defend ourselves, or to resist and put the enemy to flight: from what magazine shall we be provided? These questions are answered at large, and perfectly to satisfaction, in the portion of scripture, which it shall be the design of the following Discourse to explain, being the portion appointed for the epistle of this day.

“Finally, my brethren (says the apostle, having finished his scheme of duty), be strong.” If the sentence closed here, the exhortation would be to little purpose. He who exhorts a weak man to become strong, only mocks and insults him, unless the means are pointed out by which this change may be effected; unless the source be discovered, from whence strength is derived.

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” That which was wanting, is now fully supplied. What the power of God’s might is, we very well know. Mountains tremble, and rocks melt before it; the sea feels it, and flies; Jordan is driven back. Armies are discomfited, and cut off by a blast, in the night. The world itself was produced by this power, in one instant, and may be destroyed in another. All created power, if opposed to that of the Creator, withers and falls, like a leaf in autumn, when shaken by the stormy wind and tempest. It is “in the power of this might,” that the apostle exhorts us to “be strong.” But how is this?—“Hast thou an arm like God; or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?” Yet St. Paul would never enjoin us to seek after that, which could not be obtained. Our Redeemer is Almighty; he is with us by his Spirit, and his strength is ours. Look at his apostles in their natural state; ignorant, and fearful of every thing: view them “endued with power from on high;” acquainted with the whole counsel of God, and bold to proclaim it through all the nations of the earth. During the persecutions of the church in her infant state, numbers of the weaker sex, receiving strength and courage from above, in the hour of trial, patiently endured all the torments which the malice of men and devils could invent. They triumphed gloriously.—“Now are they crowned, and receive palms from the Son of God, whom they confessed in the world.” The promise of assistance in time of need is

to us all; to us, and to our children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. From thee, blessed Jesus, we learn our duty: to thee must we look, and to thy all-powerful grace, for strength to perform it. Not in ourselves, but in thee, and in the power of thy might, we are strong. Without thee, we can do nothing: with thee, we can do all things.

It is this consideration which alone can support us, when we take a view of the enemies, whom we must encounter. Attend to our apostle's description of them.—“ We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” The meaning is, that our own desires, carrying us on, through the corruption of our nature, toward forbidden actions, are not the only enemies with whom we are to contend; that there are others, not the less to be dreaded because we cannot see them; namely, evil spirits, who, having been cast out of heaven, are permitted, for a while, to disturb the earth; to stir up against us either our own passions within, or the passions of other men without us; thus keeping the world in perpetual agitation, as the waves of the sea are driven and tossed by the wind. Such is our state, and the danger of it calls upon us diligently to learn and to practise all the rules which will presently be given us.

Men, in our days, however, have found out a much shorter method, than that prescribed by the apostle, of dealing with these our spiritual enemies. They either disbelieve the existence of any such; or, if they believe it, agree to think no more of them. Too often indeed we hear the name of our great adversary pronounced; but it is only as a kind of expletive in common conversation. No point is less seriously thought of; and it seems as if Christians were disposed to lay it by, as an antiquated fable. Yet, if the scriptures are not to be laid by, at the same time, this adversary is there represented as something real, and something formidable. To him are ascribed the force of a lion, and the subtlety of a serpent; he is said to deceive the whole world; to have put it into the heart of Ananias to tell a lie, and of Judas, to betray his Master; to work in all the children of disobedience. We are told, in short, that “the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.” And can we then calmly, and sedately let it pass, that there are no such



works, and no such person ; or, that it is a matter of indifference, whether there be, or not ! Rest assured that such enemies we have, and that we shall fail in the combat, unless aided by a strength far superior to our own.

But since the strongest man enters not into battle without his armour, proceed we to consider that, which, as the soldiers of Jesus Christ, the apostle directs us to provide.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.”

We must not so rely on the divine assistance, as to neglect our own exertions. Besides the strength communicated, as occasion requires, from above, there must be certain fixed and lasting dispositions wrought in the mind, which may render it at all times prepared and qualified to resist the enemy. These are represented as so many different pieces of armour, which all together compose what is styled “the whole armour of God.” From him we receive it, and by him we are enabled to use it. It is to be put on and worn constantly ; no more to be laid aside than our limbs,\* or our faculties. Nor must any part be omitted : —“Put on the *whole* armour of God.” It is elsewhere called “the armour of *light* ;” as serving, among other purposes, to discover to us the position, strength, and designs of our adversaries,—“the rulers of the darkness of this world,” who love darkness, and work in darkness. They must be discovered, before they can be conquered, or indeed attacked. Otherwise, approaching unseen, they may suddenly attack and conquer us. Even when we have a sufficiency of light, the day of battle is, as the apostle says of it, “an evil day,” a day of toil, of labour, of hazard ; a day, which all must wish to be well over ; a day, in which nothing, but the armour of God, and the power of God, can enable us to brave the fury of the conflict ; and, having performed every thing expected of us as soldiers, to be found, unrepulsed, on our station, when it shall be happily ended. —“That ye may be able to stand in the evil day ; and, having done all, to stand.”

Let us now survey, one by one, the several pieces of this divine armour, only first premising to you, that St. Paul borrows his ideas from the arms in use among the nations in

\* *Arma enim membra militis esse dicunt. Cic.*

his own time, some of which are still retained, while others have been long since dropped and changed.

“Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”

The Christian must not suffer himself to be surprised. He must be always under arms, ever looking out, and waiting for the enemy, in the posture of a combatant. In a camp, unless the watch be duly set, and kept, sleep may be death. “I found him dead”—said the general, who killed a sentinel sleeping on his post—“I found him dead, and I left him so.” “Stand, therefore.”

In the next words, “having your loins girt about with truth,” an allusion is made to the military belt, or girdle. It answered two ends. First, it prevented the other garments from being in the way; secondly, it braced and strengthened the loins, around which it was girt. In a word, it rendered all compact and firm. A sincere and hearty attachment to truth has a like effect upon the mind. The man possessed of it is at once decided in his choice, and in his measures. He knows what he has to do, and readily sets about it, without let or hinderance. A double minded man, who is guided sometimes by principle, and sometimes by interest, is unstable and dilatory in all his ways. He has so many doubts and difficulties, and hopes, and fears, that he can no more move and act with spirit and alertness, than one incumbered with a long flowing vestment, in the folds of which the arms and feet are every moment entangled. The resolutions formed by such an one are weak and feeble, presently shaken and dissolved by every fresh consideration which comes across him. He does nothing, or what is worse than nothing, being generally, in the end, for want of strength and steadiness, carried away to do what he ought not to do. If he knows the truth, he is easily prevailed upon to forsake it, for something else. A soldier of this cast will make but a despicable figure in the Christian camp. Above all things, therefore, keep the truth close to you, adhere immovably to it, and “the truth shall make you free;” free to speak, free to act, free—should there be occasion—to suffer. “Stand, having your loins girt about with truth,—

“And having on the breast-plate of righteousness.” The breast-plate, as its name imports, was a plate of iron, or brass, to secure the breast, and, consequently, the heart, and other vital parts, contained within it. As an attachment to

truth was denominated a girdle, so by a breast-plate is represented a love of righteousness, a consciousness of integrity, in short, what we call, a good conscience—"a conscience void of offence (as the apostle elsewhere speaks) toward God and toward man." But if any man sin—and every man has sinned—how then can he possess such a conscience? By such his sin being forgiven, upon his repentance, through the blood of Christ; when he becomes again righteous—for he is accounted to be so, against whom no charge any longer lies—and his conscience is rendered again pure, or void of offence; for the offence being forgiven, is no more an offence, than if it had never existed. This is what we must ever mean by a good conscience, a pure conscience, a conscience void of offence; since, if by those expressions were meant, a consciousness of having never offended, no man living upon earth could have a conscience good, pure, and void of offence; much less could St. Paul have had such an one, who confesses himself to have been "the greatest of sinners."

A good conscience, then, we say, is a breast-plate; it gives a holy confidence in God, which breaks the force of such temptations as arise from the fears and terrors of the world, the malice, pride, and envy of mankind. It preserves the heart whole and sound, whatever of this kind may assail it. It is like a warm comfortable house, into which a man retreats; where he finds good provision, and good company; and hears the storm without, beating upon it in vain. By doing what is right, and taking the proper method to obtain forgiveness, when at any time you have been unawares seduced to do wrong, "exercise yourselves," as the apostle did, "to have a conscience void of offence," and rejoice evermore in its testimony. Secure this friend at home, and regard not what your enemies are saying against you abroad.—"Their words may be spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword;" but "the breast-plate of righteousness" is proof against all their strokes.

We are enjoined, thirdly, to "have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

It is by the feet that men advance and make a progress in the way in which they are to go. That way is sometimes rough, sometimes miry, sometimes beset with briars and thorns. Soldiers of old were therefore furnished with a kind

of armour for the leg and foot, that they might march, secure and unhurt, over all the different kinds of ground they were to meet with. Answerable hereunto is a certain "preparation" of mind in a Christian, to advance in holiness, and tread the path of duty, however rough with hardships, deep with afflictions, or perplexed and entangled with difficulties. For this preparation we are indebted to "the gospel of peace." That alone can supply us with it.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked;" or "the wicked one."

The shield or buckler, used of old, was a piece of defensive armour, made of leather, of tough bull-hides, and covered with plates of brass, thick and strong: it was fastened by thongs to the left arm, and readily moved to protect any part of the body, at which the warrior perceived, or had reason to expect, that a dart would be aimed: the dart then struck the shield, was stopped, blunted, and fell harmless to the ground. Such to the Christian warrior is *faith*, or *belief*, in the divine promises and threatenings, the rewards and punishments of a future state. It repels and extinguishes the fiery darts thrown by the tempting objects around us. For who would yield to a base lust; who would suffer a prospect of this world's wealth or honour to tempt him from his duty, if he saw heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, holding out a crown for the righteous; or the Almighty on his throne, prepared with a thunderbolt to strike the wicked into a place of torment? We do not see this with the bodily eye; but faith, which is "the evidence of things not seen" as yet, makes it all present to the mind's eye, and thus repels every temptation to transgress, causing the fiery dart of the wicked one to fall, and *go out*, without hurting us. Were our faith always awake and active, it would preserve us in our integrity: we never sin, but when we have first suffered it to slumber: we are off our guard:—"the shield of the mighty has been shamefully cast away."

The last piece of defensive armour recommended by the apostle is, "the helmet of salvation."

The helmet, as is well known, was a cap of iron or steel for the head, to fence against any blows a part so very important; a part, from whence proceed all those instruments of sensation, called the nerves; the seat of thought and



understanding; and, as many philosophers have imagined, the residence of the soul herself. The meaning of St. Paul in this expression is explained in another passage, where, writing on the same subject, he says, "And for an *helmet*, the *hope* of salvation." When we have lost *hope*, a blow has been struck, that stupifies and unnerves us; understanding perishes, and strength fails; despair is to the *Christian*, what a stroke that cleaves the skull is to the *man*; there is no longer the breath of life in him. He who possesses the hope of salvation, through the power of such hope can do all things, and bear all things; because he still looks forward to the end of his hope, which will reward all his actions, and make ample amends for all his sufferings; but that once given up, there is nothing any longer worth contending for, or thinking about. The mind, turning itself on every side to seek rest, and finding none, sinks into all the wretchedness of utter despondency, and the agonizing groan of suicide is heard! Daily therefore cherish and invigorate your hope in Christ; pray daily to God, that it may never fail you; diligently read such parts of holy scripture as may revive it when languishing, and re-establish it. Should you find your own meditations insufficient, consult, without delay, your minister, or some religious and sensible friend. A word of instruction, comfort, and encouragement, from another, spoken in season, has often prevented the dreadful crime of self-murder from being committed. Evermore, then, remember to "take for an helmet, the hope of salvation;" and put it not off, till the contest be finally over, and hope ceases by our becoming possessed of its object.

To the Christian, thus armed for defence in the day of battle, the apostle recommends only one *offensive* weapon; but it is abundantly sufficient; "the *sword* of the Spirit, which is the word of God;" sharper than any two-edged sword fabricated by the art of man, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; reaching the very thoughts and intentions; subduing and mortifying evil desires and blasphemous imaginations, as they arise within; confuting and silencing infidelity and error, as they assault us from without. A single text, well understood, and rightly applied, pierces the heart of a temptation or an objection, and lays the most formidable adversary dead at our feet. With this weapon the blessed Jesus con-

quered in the wilderness; by the same weapon, and no other, must every disciple of his expect to conquer in the world.

And now, friends and fellow soldiers in the Christian warfare, listen to the voice of inspiration, and be directed by one who cannot direct you wrong. Enemies of all kinds surround you; enter not into the battle unarmed: the host of darkness is in array against you; put on the armour of light, to discover and survey it. Let truth be the girdle of your loins, let righteousness be the protection of your heart, and let the sandals of the gospel of peace adorn and defend your feet in the way in which you go: let faith be your invincible shield, and hope your impenetrable helmet: and on the thigh be girded the sword of the Spirit, bright and shining, and ready for use, and to be drawn, at a moment's warning. Thus completely armed from head to foot, always remembering from whence come skill and strength for the battle, fall upon your knees, as the apostle enjoins at the close of his exhortation; "pray with all supplication, and watch with all perseverance." Then go forth, and may the Almighty go forth with you, teaching your hands to war, and your fingers to fight, and at length giving you a complete and glorious victory over every enemy, through the Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ.

## DISCOURSE XXXVIII.

### THE DUTY OF CONSIDERING THE POOR.

*Blessed is he that considereth the poor.*—Psalm xl. 1.

As the world was made by wisdom, it requires wisdom to understand the frame of it. The more a man increases in wisdom, the more he will understand it; and the more he understands, the more he will approve. The full perfection of a complex machine in all its parts, with their respective

bearings, and mutual dependencies on each other, is best comprehended by an artist. Superficial thinkers see little, and blame; deep thinkers see much, and commend.

In viewing the constitution of the moral system, there is scarcely a phenomenon that strikes so forcibly upon the mind, or occasions so much perplexity in it, as that of the inequality of mankind, or the state and condition of the poor. In the passage of scripture which has just been read, we are invited, by the promise of a blessing, to employ our thoughts on that subject:—"Blessed is he that considereth the poor;" that giveth himself thoroughly to study and understand their case, and why it is as it is; to see the reason of the thing, and his own duty resulting from it.

The inequality of mankind is a plain and undeniable matter of fact: nor does it happen occasionally, in this or that age, in this or that country: it is universal and unavoidable, at least in the situation of affairs which has taken place in the world, since the fall. From that period, it ever has been so, it ever will be so, it ever must be so, till the time of the restitution of all things. What, then, will be the first consideration with a rich man, when he sees a poor man? If he be endowed with a clear head, and a good heart, will he not reason in some such manner as the following?

God has given the earth to the children of men, for the support of all. While I abound, why does this man want? Plainly, that we may bear one another's burdens; that my abundance may supply his need, may alleviate his distress, may help to sustain the affliction under which he groans; that I may take off his load of woe, and he take off the superfluity of my wealth; that so the stream, now broken and turbid, may again find its level, and flow pure and tranquil. Otherwise, if he be suffered thus to carry, on his own shoulders, through life, the weight of all this accumulated misery, should he murmur and complain, would it not be with some colour of justice, and must not I in some measure be answerable for his so doing? We are formed, by the same Artificer, of the same materials; our trust is in the same Saviour, and we must stand before the same Judge: yet are there, on my side, health, affluence, and joy; on his, sickness, indigence, and sorrow: I have enough to supply every want that luxury itself can fancy; while he has not wherewithal

to support his family, or to satisfy his own hunger. Surely, for this very end were riches bestowed upon me, and not without a design is this poor object thrown in my way, that I might use them aright, and justify the ways of Providence. The inequality of nature shall be rectified by religion. This man shall have as much as he needs, and I can enjoy no more. He shall not want, while I have to spare. God, who has given to man, delights that man should give; and he who gives most, does most resemble his Maker.

Nor let the rich imagine, that what they thus give is thrown away, or given to those who can make no return: let them not grudge to bestow some part of their wealth on the poor—they bestow it on those, to whom, under God, they owe the whole. For what, I beseech you, is the nature of society? Is it composed only of the noble and opulent? Did you ever hear, or read, of one that was so composed? Such a society could not subsist for a week. As the members of it would not work, they could not eat. Of what value were your estates in the country, if the poor did not cultivate them? Of what account the riches of the nobleman, or the gentleman, if they must want the comforts, the conveniences, and even the necessaries of life? “The king himself is served by the field;” and, without the labours of the husbandman, must starve in his palace, surrounded by his courtiers and guards. The world depends, for subsistence, on the plough, the sickle, and the flail!\* To what purpose warehouses of merchandise in the city? Who but the poor will submit to the drudgery of exporting our own commodities, and importing others in return? Nay, by whom, but by the poor, could they be prepared either for consumption at home, or exportation abroad; could they be manufactured from first to last; could they be brought and lodged in the warehouses of the merchant; could such warehouses be built, and fitted to receive them?

Mankind, in short, constitute one vast body, to the support of which every member contributes his share; and by all of them together, as by so many greater and lesser wheels in a machine, the business of the public is carried on, its necessities are served, and its very existence is upholden. And in this body we may truly say, that the lowest and least honourable members are as necessary as any others;

\* See M'Farlan, p. 236.



indeed, they have, in one sense, a more abundant honour; for though the head be, without all doubt, a more noble part than either the feet or the hands, yet what would soon be the fate of the best head in the world, if these its servants should cease to minister to it? The rich, therefore, cannot live alone without the poor; and they never support the poor, but the poor have first supported them. And should they be permitted to perish, by whom we all live? Forbid it prudence and gratitude, as well as philosophy and religion.

From hence it appears, that the inequality of mankind is not the effect of chance, but the ordinance of heaven, by whose appointment, as manifested in the constitution of the universe, some must command, while others obey; some must labour, while others direct their labours; some must be rich, while others are poor. The scripture inculcates the same important truth, and the inference to be deduced from it—"The poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land."\* Such is the method directed by heaven of balancing the account between the different orders of men. Any other scheme of equality would destroy itself, as soon as formed. And politicians should be extremely cautious how they propagate principles tending to render the subordinate ranks in society discontented with their condition, and desirous of aspiring to one for which they were never designed by Providence; of whose arrangements in the moral, we may say, as the psalmist does of those in the natural world,—“In wisdom hast thou made them all!”

The foregoing consideration will suggest another to the mind of every one, whose meditations are turned toward the subject. For since there is—and, to answer the purposes of society, there must be—such inequality among men, it is but natural to ask the man, who finds himself in a situation preferable to that of his neighbour, and yet refuses to have compassion upon him in his distress—How came your lot to be cast in so fair a ground? You might have been destitute of health and strength, of food and raiment, of instruction and knowledge. Who caused you thus to differ from your poor brother? His capacity, perhaps, with due cultivation, might have evinced itself not a whit inferior to

\* Deut. xv. 11.

your own; his morals may be purer than yours; and had he been possessed of your wealth, he might have made a better use of it than you do. It is not your merit, or his demerit, which occasions the difference between you. It has been permitted, that the work of God may be manifested in you both; that he, from his poverty, may learn patience and resignation, and you be taught charity, and the right employment of the good things vouchsafed you. He was not suffered to fall into this condition, that you should overlook and despise, but that you should consider and comfort him. You have an advantage over him, without doubt; and your Saviour has informed you wherein it consists—"It is more blessed to give, than to receive." Secure this blessing, and the end of your being made to differ is answered.

It might have pleased God that you *should* have been poor. But this is not all: it may please him, that you *shall* be so; and hard would you esteem it, in such a case, not then to experience the benevolence you are now invited to display. It is God's high prerogative to exalt, and to abase: he putteth down one, and setteth up another. The history of the world is but a comment on this text. Empires, whose stamina seemed to have been composed of iron and brass, are seen to decay and perish; while others, little thought of, arise from the dust, and flourish in their places. That the same thing happens respecting families and individuals, the chronicles of the times contain abundant evidence: and instances will occur to your minds of revolutions in this way, sudden and decisive as that mentioned by the psalmist in another—"In the morning it is green, and groweth up; but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered!" To these rapid changes, citizens of commercial states are more liable than others. A fleet puts to sea, laden with the precious commodities of the east or the west. At the word of the Creator, the stormy wind ariseth; the vessels are dispersed; they sink in the mighty waters; the fortunes and the hopes of the owners go down with them. The failure of one person affects many others; and these breaches on private credit cause us, ever and anon, to cast an anxious eye toward the public, and to think what might have been the effect of an insurrection, and a conflagration. To the riches of this country is more peculiarly applicable that

which the wise man saith of them in general—"They make themselves wings;" yea, *their* wings are ready made; they are prepared, at the shortest notice, to "fly away," and leave a nation poor indeed! Thus weighty and powerful are the reasons why we should not trust in riches, so eminently *uncertain*, without taking into the account examples, in which the Almighty sometimes makes bare his holy arm in a more tremendous manner.

But whether riches leave you, or not, yet a little while---and it can be but a little while---before you must leave them. However gay and prosperous you go through life, death will certainly strip you of all, and leave you more truly destitute than the neediest wretch that was ever laid at your gate. Neither land nor money can accompany you to the grave. The hour must come---and while we speak, it is hastening forward---when strength will droop, beauty will fade, and spirits will fail; when physicians will despair, friends will lament, and all will retire; when from the palaces of the city, and the paradises of the country, you must go down to the place where all these things are forgotten, and take up your residence in the solitude of the tomb. What, *then*, will riches avail? Much every way, if they have been bestowed in charity; if the thought of death---that most profitable and salutary of all thoughts, that epitome of true philosophy---shall have excited you, through life, to "consider the poor."

For it is in the gospel, that we must seek *full* information on the subject of this most important duty. It is there, and there alone, we are instructed to behold the poor, as we ought to behold them; to consider (if I may use such apparently strange expressions) their pre-eminence, their dignity, and those especial privileges, with which they are invested, under the new economy. The world was redeemed by one, who, for that purpose, did not disdain to appear in the form of a poor man; one, who, while "the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, had not where to lay his head." I speak to them that "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich." *His* appearance in this state has cast a glory round it, and forces us to view it in a new light; so that although to the bodily eye nothing appears but what is base, mean, and

contemptible, yet the interior eye of the understanding, enlightened from above, discovers the person of the Saviour, the images of his poverty, the citizens of his kingdom, the heirs of his promises, the stewards of his blessings. Let it be allowed me, in passing, barely to suggest a hint in favour of the religion, which has thus furnished a remedy for the inequality of mankind; and, while its precepts shall be obeyed by the rich, has provided for the welfare and comfort of the poor.

But in what measure, it may be said, are these precepts to be obeyed? How are we to proportion our donations to our fortunes? The number of those who call upon us for assistance is daily increasing; and so are the expenses of life, which render us less able to assist them.

In answer to these questions, it might perhaps be asserted, that, were the Christian principle firmly rooted in the heart, they would never be asked. True charity stands not in need of being told how much it should give. It is in its nature free and unbounded, as the air diffused through the spaces around us, or the light which flows in every direction from the centre, for the support and animation of the world. It fulfils the law, or rather, goes beyond all law, and of its own will effects that wherein law itself fails. It not only "works no ill to its neighbour;" it does him all the good in its power, and wishes it could do him more.—Thus much might be replied in general. But, as this is a part of our subject which comes home to men's business and bosoms; as, through the infirmity and corruption that are in us, the divine principle may at times be upon the decline, and the selfish principle likely to gain the ascendant, it may not be improper to dwell a moment longer upon it, and to lay down a rule or two, the observance of which will greatly conduce toward sustaining the one, and repressing the other.\*

The first rule shall be this:—Let every person, at those seasons when he is in the receipt of his income, lay aside a certain proportion, as he is disposed in his heart, for charitable uses; and let it be, ever after, sacred to those uses. A bank of this kind would enable a man to answer bills of considerable value at sight, which otherwise not being able to do, or at least not without great inconvenience, many opportunities of succouring the distressed must needs be lost. The

\* See Bourdaloue sur l'Aumône, et Bib. Chois. xiv. 291.



money being once appropriated, he feels not the loss, nor grudges the payment, when demanded. Thus he is always giving, and has always something to give.

The second rule, if you please, may be the following:—*Practise economy, with a view to charity.* The same charity, which is desirous of doing the utmost for the benefit of its poor neighbour, is likewise very ingenious in devising the ways and means of doing it. And though, in the present state of society, it be not required, that the opulent should sell their possessions, and divide the produce among the indigent, or that persons of all ranks and conditions should live in the same style: yet, surely, no one can survey the world, as it goes now among us, without being of opinion, that *something*—and that very far from inconsiderable—*something*, I say, might be retrenched from the expenses of building, *something* from those of furniture, *something* from those of dress, *something* from those of the table, *something* from those of diversions and amusements, public and private, for the relief and consolation of the many, who have neither a cottage to inhabit, garments to cover them, bread to eat, medicine to heal them, nor any one circumstance in life to lighten their load of misery, or cheer their sorrowful and desponding souls, in the day of calamity and affliction. Certainly a man would be no loser, who should sometimes sit down to a less profuse and costly board at home, if, at his going abroad, “when the ear heard him, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him; because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; if the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” Beneficence is the most exquisite luxury, and the good man, after all, is the genuine epicure.

Here, then, is a mine opened, which, when worked by economy, under the direction of prudence, will be found inexhaustible, furnishing a constant and ample revenue for the disbursements of charity, to the profit of multitudes, without oppressing or injuring any one human being. Nay, from that diversion (if it can be called such), under the effects of which the nation now groans through all its powers, the evil might soon be extracted, could a law be possibly carried into execution, enacting, that the sums respectively lost and won should be applied to the same blessed purpose. The

amusement might continue, and pleasure be employed in the interest of virtue.

The supplies thus provided, let us advert to the expenditure.

Of the poor, some are both able and willing to work. When these are forced to beg, because no one will hire them to dig, their lot is truly pitiable. The most excellent method of showing charity to such, is by finding them employment, which at once relieves their wants, and preserves them from temptation. Every scheme that policy can devise should be put in practice at this time, when so many thousands, that have been engaged, at the hazard of their lives, in our defence and protection, by sea and land, must otherwise be reduced to starve, to steal, or to emigrate. Individuals, blessed with affluence, have a noble opportunity of adorning their estates, while, with this farther end in view, as citizens, they most effectually serve their country, and, as Christians, they shall by no means lose their reward. The community should strain every nerve in the cause. Days of peace should be days of improvement. Designs of public utility should be forthwith entered upon. Returning and increasing commerce will suggest many. The encouragement of manufactures, the establishment of new fisheries in different parts of the kingdom, the cultivation of waste lands, of which (strange to tell!) there are thousands of acres lying within a few miles of the metropolis—these are the objects, which rival statesmen should unite to prosecute. Let us hope we shall live to see the day, when they will do so!—"In the multitude of the people is the strength of the king." Provide employment, and you will never want people, nor will those people want food. Hands will flock where there is work to be done; and between working and eating the connexion is indissoluble.\*

In the second class of the poor may be ranked those who are able to work, but not willing. These compose a band very formidable to society. To maintain them in idleness, is to render them every day more so. They must be inured to labour by wholesome discipline. You cannot show them a greater kindness. Thus, and thus only, can their ferocity be tamed, and their passions subdued; good principles may in time take the place of bad ones, and habits of industry

\* See M'Farlan, p. 416.

by degrees be formed and matured. To effect this end by these means is the design (and a most admirable design it is) of one part of those many charitable institutions, for which this great and flourishing city is so deservedly famous throughout the world, and for which I have the honour this day to appear as an unworthy advocate.

Another part of them is calculated to diminish, as much as may be, the numbers of this class of poor; it goes directly to the root of the disorder, and endeavours, that the good principles and habits above-mentioned may from the very beginning be implanted in the young and tender mind, by a virtuous and well-conducted education, thus sowing the seeds of felicity for future ages.

In the most ample and munificent manner is provision made by others of them for a third class of poor, such, I mean, as are willing to work, but not able; for, of whatever nature the disability may be, or from whatever cause it may have proceeded, whether from casual hurt, from the languor of disease, or from a distempered mind, immediate help is at hand. All the pressing miseries incident to man have here their peculiar houses of reception and relief, where the most consummate skill, medical and chirurgical, that can be obtained by him who is the possessor of millions, is readily and cheerfully exerted for the ease and recovery of the poor\*—institutions these, unknown, unthought of, in the polished ages of Greece and Rome—peculiar to the days of the gospel—the boast of Christianity (were it capable of boasting), the ornament and glory of this great emporium!—How effectual they have proved in answering the several ends proposed, the *Report*, now to be recited, will best inform you.

#### HERE THE REPORT WAS READ.

The case itself speaks so forcibly to your feelings, and calls so loudly for your kind assistance, that it renders needless any long exhortation from the preacher. The expenses annually incurred by the several hospitals you find to exceed their certain revenues; and, therefore, they must depend, for support, on the farther donations of the benevolent. Suffer not the blaze of charity, which now burns with so much heat and splendour, to die away for want of lasting fuel.

\* M'Farlan, 299.

You have heard how useful these establishments have proved; be it your endeavour to make them permanent. Whatever can be spared (and, with proper management, much by every one may be spared), let it be lodged, as a treasure—a treasure to yourselves, as well as to them—in these public repositories. It is lodged in good hands, and will be employed, to the uttermost farthing, as your hearts can desire. Did I plead only for one of them, attention would be due; let me not lift up my voice in vain, when I lift it up for them all.—“Among those actions,” says the great moralist of the age—“among those actions which the mind can most securely review with unabated pleasure, is that of having contributed to an hospital for the sick.” But we have a more sure word, a word which cannot fail, which shall stand fast for ever—a word of promise, that he who has been the means of giving comfort to the sick, besides being blessed with prosperity in the days of health, shall, when himself in sickness, be comforted with comfort from above.—“Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.” The same gracious hand will conduct him, in perfect safety, through the valley of the shadow of death, to that holy and heavenly hill, where he shall be hailed by the thousands he has relieved, and see the face of that Redeemer, for whose sake he has relieved them.



## DISCOURSE XXXIX.

CHARITY TO THE BRETHREN OF CHRIST.

*And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*—Matt. xxv. 40.

YET, once again, by the favour of the Almighty, we have lived to see the return of this holy season: again we are assembled in the house of God, to turn our thoughts toward the second advent of our Lord. The church, by her services on this day, directs us to do so, and we will obey her. In the portion of scripture selected for the gospel, his appearance and the forerunners of it are marked out for our contemplation; signs above, and terrors beneath: the earth distressed and perplexed, the powers of heaven shaken, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming—the trumpet sounds through all the regions of the grave,—“Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment:” the everlasting doors are unfolded: the King of glory, triumphant Messiah, Lord of men and angels, appears in the resplendent robes of celestial majesty: the armies in heaven follow him in procession, down to this lower world: the throne is set; the books are opened: the dead are judged; and that sentence is passed, from which there lies no appeal.

Is all this true! Most assuredly it is. No person who hears me at this moment dares even to *think* it is not. A monitor within bears a faithful testimony to what I say, and will not suffer infidelity or doubt to intrude.

And are we—you and I—concerned in it all? As certainly as we are now met together in this place: no man or woman, who ever has been, or ever will be born, can claim exemption—“We must *all* appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.”

Some little degree of curiosity I should therefore hope may have been excited, to inquire into the grounds upon which

will be passed an irreversible sentence either to everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery: for there is no middle condition; of one or the other we must inevitably partake. The scripture, from whence my text is taken, will afford us considerable assistance in the inquiry, and enable us to form some sort of opinion before hand, where our lot is likely to fall.

Our Lord, according to St. Matthew's account, being at the eve of his sufferings, the history of which commences at the next (the 26th) chapter, closes his divine instructions to his disciples, with a representation of his future proceedings on the great and awful day.—“When the Son of man,” says he, “shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd [in the evening] divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” To the former he first addresses that inexpressibly sweet invitation, mercy to the last rejoicing against judgment, and delighting to give the inheritance which it had spared no pains to purchase—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Now, be pleased to observe the reason upon which this invitation is founded.—“For,” saith Christ, “I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” The righteous, very few of whom, out of the innumerable multitudes that are to be then assembled, ever saw their Lord in the days of his humiliation, wondering what this should mean, reply, with all the submissive earnestness of affection,—“Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink; or relieved thee in any of the other circumstances, of which thou art pleased thus to speak?” The words of the text contain his most gracious answer—“Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

Let us consider the *works* to be done, the *principle* on which they are to be done, and the *acceptance* they will be sure to find.

I. The works to be done—"Inasmuch as ye have done it." By a Christian, there is always something to be *done*. It was never intended that he, of all men, should be idle. Providence has given him powers and opportunities, and will require an account of the use that has been made of them. In the gospel we are told of a servant, styled the unprofitable servant. Instead of improving the talent committed to his trust, he had hidden his lord's money in the earth; he had buried his faculties in sloth and sensuality; they had produced nothing. Dreadful was his punishment, and it was in kind: he was bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness; as he *would* do nothing when he had the power, that power was taken from him, and he now *could* do nothing, but reflect for ever on his own misery, and the happiness he had lost.

Respecting the men of the world, it cannot be said, that they are always idle: they often are busily employed; they are doing something; they are doing much; but it is mischief—mischief to themselves, mischief to others. And to very few of those, whose exploits fill the volumes of history, and engage the attention of ages, can it be truly said,—“Well done, good and faithful servant.” The unprofitable and the workers of iniquity will be bound with the same chain.

Of doing evil we frequently think—if we think at all—with abhorrence, and, it is to be hoped, labour to keep ourselves from it. But the crime of doing nothing, with the penalty annexed to it, is not recollected. That we have often, notwithstanding all our care, “done those things which we ought not to have done,” we must be sensible; but who is he, that duly considers how often he has “left undone those things which he ought to have done.” They are the sins of *omission*, that will crowd the account at the last day, more in number than the hairs of our heads. The thought would cause our hearts to fail us, should God be extreme to mark them.

The character of the Christian religion is most exactly portrayed in those few words which describe the life of its founder—“He went about, doing good;” *active in beneficence*, always in motion, for some salutary purpose; to relieve the distresses, and comfort the sorrows of poor mankind. He expects that they who profess to be his followers, should be such more especially in this respect. Of the dis-

ciple Tabitha, it is testified by the Holy Spirit, in the Acts of the Apostles, that "she was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did." The garments wrought by her own hands for the poor, were produced before the apostle, to prove that she had not been idle; that she had been *employed*; that she had been *well* employed. She obtained the peculiar favour of a resurrection to this life, to show, I suppose, that all like her will obtain one to a better. What a sad reverse have we in the case of the rich glutton! He appropriated to his own luxury, the means put into his hands to do good to others. And where is he now? You hear his voice requesting of the wretched object, that had lain neglected at his gate, "a drop of water to cool his tongue." Wretched man that he was! so to lose the opportunities, which shall never return!—But why should I multiply instances, or say any more upon this part of the subject, when our Lord, in the scripture before us, has declared, that his gracious invitation, "Come, ye blessed," will be made only to such as have performed these works of charity? How can it be made to us, if we have *not* performed them? From the necessity of performing them, pass we, therefore,—

II. To the *principle* upon which they must be performed.

By faith we are saved; but faith without works is dead; it is no more faith, effectual to salvation, than a dead corpse is a man; it is a tree without fruit: notwithstanding all its professions, it will be sentenced to the axe and to the fire. The proper fruit of faith is love; love of God, who has done so much for man; love of man, for whom God hath done so much. Love can work no ill to its neighbour; its nature is to work him all the good in its power; it branches forth into every office of charity mentioned by our Lord; it feeds the hungry; gives drink to the thirsty; clothes the naked; lodges the stranger; visits, and comforts the sick, and those that are in prison. It may not be able literally and personally to do all this; but it provides for this being done, by freely and liberally contributing that money, which answers every thing. And these acts of beneficence and kindness are performed, not out of interest, or party, or to serve a turn; not out of vanity, or ostentation, or because others perform them, and we shall be reflected on, and lose the esteem of men, if we neglect to perform them; but they are performed through faith in what Christ has done and suf-



ferred for us, and through a grateful desire of making some return, for all his goodness, to those whom he is pleased to style *his brethren*.—"Inasmuch as ye have done it to these *my brethren*." The children being partakers of flesh and blood, he also (by coming in the flesh) partook of the same; for which reason he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*. Consider duly the weight of this motive. When you do good upon the strength of it, it is as if you addressed a poor person in the following manner:—I relieve you in your distress because of the near relation you bear to that blessed person, who has relieved me in all mine; my friend, my benefactor, my Saviour, my God. I too was an hungred, and he gave me the bread of life; I was thirsty, and he gave me the water of life; I was a stranger, not belonging to the fold, and he took me into it; I was naked, and he clothed me with the robe of righteousness; I was sick, and he visited me, and comforted me, and made me whole; I was in prison, and he came to me, loosed the bands of sin and death, and brought me forth into light, liberty, and salvation. You come recommended to me as one of those, whom he condescends to call his brethren. Accept, for his sake, what I can give you; I would it were more: all I have is too little.

You see, then, the principle on which Christ directs that our charity should be shown. A noble, comprehensive, affecting principle it is. It involves within its compass, and supposes to be known and believed, the whole of Christianity. Thus employed, faith has its perfect work: it is made perfect in love. The acceptance it will be sure to find is the—

III<sup>d</sup>. And last point to be considered.

Our Lord accepts such works, when done upon such a principle, as if they had been done to himself.—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*." And this produces a reason for his rewarding them, which no other consideration would afford. Infinite mercy, after bestowing every thing upon us, has, as it were, set itself to contrive a manner in which it might become our debtor.—"You have done these acts of kindness to *ME*; I take upon me to recompense them." There is something so utterly astonishing in all this, that we might have imagined some mistake crept into the text, had no other passage of scripture conveyed to us the same idea. For that our Lord will accept and reward what shall be so

done to *him*, can be known only from himself, and his Holy Spirit.

But to *reward*, is the great end of his coming ; as he has himself declared, in the 22d chapter of St. John's Revelation—" Behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be."

Before his appearance in the flesh, as at this time, he proclaimed by one of his holy prophets, that whatsoever we give to the poor, he esteems as lent to himself ; which much resembles the words of the text,—“ Ye have done it unto me.” And he does not disdain to add, that he will be accountable for it ; since thus we read, in the book of Proverbs, “ He that hath pity upon the poor, *lendeth* unto the Lord ; and look”—expect, depend upon it, be assured—“ it shall be paid him again.” Sir Thomas More, a famous Lord Chancellor of England, used always to say, “ there was more rhetoric,” more persuasive argument, “ in this little sentence, than in a whole library.”

Again. He assures us, by his blessed apostle, that every deed of kindness which is shown, in this manner, toward *his name*, will be *remembered* ; for “ God (saith the apostle) is not unrighteous, that he should forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shown toward his name” (toward his name, you see), “ in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister,” still continuing, persevering in your charitable contributions ; not suffering any good work of this sort, which has been begun amongst you, to cease, and come to nothing. Without apostolical authority, we should never have hazarded the expression here used ;—“ God is not unrighteous, that he should forget ;” as if we might even deem him *unjust*, if he should not remember works of charity done to himself in the persons of the poor. Thus every thing contributes to establish the gracious declaration in my text ; “ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

I ask your pardon—I have omitted a word—it runs, “ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto *the least* of these my brethren.” Not men and women only, grown persons, are meant ; children also are included ; the LEAST of these. *They* are never left out of the account by our Lord, in his promises and assurances of mercy :—“ Suffer little children to come to me : it is not the will of my Father, that one of these little

ones should perish." Though the youngest, and the least, they are still the *brethren* of the Redeemer. They share his love; let them share *yours*.—"A cup of cold water only given to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose its reward."

But it is in *your* power to give them much more. You *have* given them much more: you *have* ministered; continue still to minister. Through your bounty it is, that they now appear in this sacred place; their bodies neatly clothed, their minds duly instructed, and qualified, with us, to worship our God in the beauty of holiness. A pleasant and comfortable sight it is to behold. The world cannot show us one that is more so. Consider them as fully included in the case before us. They are in *want*; and they bear a near *relation* to Christ. They can hardly be thought, at this tender age, to have forfeited the high privileges of their baptism, in which they were made "members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven." And much indeed may it depend upon you, whether they ever do forfeit them; the great design of these excellent institutions being to afford them opportunities of instruction, which their friends are unable to give, or procure for them: to ground them well in such religious principles, as may render them good and useful members of society; conduct them safe through a world of temptations, and bring them to never-ending glory. But the support of the institution, which is to do this for them, depends upon your farther bounty. On this, destitute of every other help, they, under the providence of God, rely; on *you* their eyes and hopes are fixed, for the continuance of every advantage: and every advantage they enjoy will be continued to them, by the liberality of all such among you, as shall duly meditate upon the affecting scene I have been endeavouring to represent.

This affecting scene you will as surely see, these affecting words of the great Judge you will as surely hear, as he, who has declared you shall see and hear them, is faithful and true.

One thing only remains to be mentioned, that He who shall address those on the right hand, in the gracious language of the text, shall afterward say also to "them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungered,

and ye gave me no meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." On *their* asking, likewise, *when* he was seen of them in any of these afflicting circumstances, and they had thus ungratefully denied him relief—"He shall answer them, Inasmuch as ye did it *not* to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to *me*." The final separation is then to be made, and that gulf fixed between them, which cannot be passed ; "And these"—such as had neglected to perform works of charity—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous," they who had performed them, "into life eternal." The brethren of Christ are before you—Make your choice.

## DISCOURSE XL.

### THE PARALYTICK HEALED.

*And behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying in a bed : and Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee.—Matt. ix. 2.*

THE active and elementary parts of nature, wheresoever they exist, will manifest themselves by their effects ; fire will warm, light will shine, aromatics will send forth sweet odours. Jesus, in like manner, on all occasions discovers himself to be what his name implies, the SAVIOUR ; leaving behind him, in every place, the warmth of fervent charity, the light of evangelical doctrine, and the fragrance of a good report concerning something done for the benefit of man, and the glory of God. He goeth about, not to gratify or to profit himself, but to diffuse his beneficence. He either teaches, or comforts, or raises from the dead ; or heals, or feeds, or delivers, or departs into solitude to pray. And all for us. For us he preaches, that we may learn the



truth; for us he heals, and performs other miracles, that we may believe him; for us no less he retires, for us he prays, for us he gives thanks to his Father. Thus he changes his situation often, his disposition never; in this, as well as other things, "leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps," and not suffer any outward difference of circumstances to make us forget our Christian profession.

The Gergesenes, as we find by the conclusion of the preceding chapter, preferring the preservation of their swine to the salvation of their souls, and therefore "desiring him to depart out of their coasts; he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city, Capernaum," *viz.* the city, not where he was born, but where he lived; a trafficking, luxurious, proud city; and for that reason, as mercy looks out for the miserable, and a physician for them that are sick, chosen by him; who, though the only man that ever was without sin, disdained not to dwell and converse with sinners, seeing he came to call such to repentance.

Here it was that he performed the miracle mentioned in the text, which it is the design of the following Discourse, first to *illustrate*, and then to *apply*.

It being "noised about" (as St. Mark in his account informs us), that Jesus was returned to Capernaum, and was in a certain house in the town, "straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no not so much as about the door; and he," who always rejoiced much more to teach than any could do to learn of him, "preached the word" of life and salvation "to them." The sermon was with authority and power, and the audience very attentive.

But *behold* (for so St. Matthew introduces this miracle, and well worthy our *beholding* it will appear to be), an object on a sudden presented itself, which quickly engaged the notice of the speaker, no less than that of the hearers. A bed, with a poor wretch confined to it by the palsy, was seen descending from the roof, till it came down into the room and rested, where all that want rest must find it, at the feet of Jesus. Some good neighbours and friends of this unhappy man, it seems, who, by the nature of his disease, was rendered incapable of helping himself, were so kind as to carry him between four of them, where they knew he

might have relief. For it is plain, by the pains they took, that they had no doubt but Christ could and would heal him, if they could only contrive to place such a spectacle before his eyes. But here was the difficulty. For, upon bringing their burden to the house, they found such a crowd of people, even about the door, that there was no room for a single person more to get in, much less for four, with so ponderous and cumbrous a load. Men were not to be torn by any means from the lips of so eloquent a preacher, but were listening at the very doors and windows, to catch, if it were possible, somewhat of his doctrine. Such was, and such ever ought to be the vehement and unfeigned desire of hearing Christ's word, whenever it is preached.

What, therefore, is to be done? Shall they give it over, and return without having accomplished that for which they came? A lukewarm charity would have done so, contenting itself with the effort it had made, and concluding it impossible to do any thing more. But these men were not to be discouraged. They thought therefore of an expedient, and immediately put it in practice; the relation of which we cannot so well understand, without considering that the houses in the eastern countries were built very low, and with a flat roof, in which there was a kind of trap door, as the inhabitants often used to go up from within, and spend some time upon the "house top," where we find "David walking," and "St. Peter praying." The friends of the sick man, therefore, having contrived to raise the bed to the roof (as it was not unusual to have a passage likewise by stairs on the outside of the house), they broke open the aforementioned door that was therein (fastened probably on the inside), and let down the bed, suspended by ropes, into the midst of the assembly, before Jesus.

Behold, then, this sad spectacle—not so properly a man as a corpse. Of motion the disease deprived him; and without the power of motion, what is life? What avails it to have limbs, if they cannot be used? Nor does this distemper affect the extreme and exterior parts of the body only, but the tongue is tied, and the head disordered. The understanding is benumbed; the memory becomes like a leaky vessel, and loses all that was committed to it; the judgment is naught, and the vigour of the mind perished. Many diseases are noisome, many painful, but still the use

of the limbs is not taken away; and in most the soul is still at liberty to perform her operations. But the object before us was deprived by the palsy of both. There he lies, those that carried him looking down from above, and the eyes of all in the room, we may be sure, fixed upon him. He falls not on his knees; he lifts not up his hands; he opens not his mouth; but his helpless condition was more effectual than if he had kneeled, his silence more eloquent than any prayer he could have put up. In the ears of *mercy* nothing speaks so powerfully as *misery*.

The meek and gracious Redeemer was not at all offended at being thus interrupted, but highly approves the *faith* of those who had such confidence in him, as to let no difficulties and discouragements prevent their laying the sick man at his feet, in order to the obtaining of a cure. So much doth an operating, steady, persevering faith avail, not only for ourselves, but likewise for our poor sick brethren and neighbours; whom it is our duty to present to Christ by our prayers, as the friends of the man sick of the palsy presented him. For here is nothing mentioned about *his* faith, but only that of his *bearers*—"Jesus seeing *their* faith." And we have in St. James a promise of success made more particularly to the prayers of the priests in such cases—"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." But the duty of interceding for the afflicted—incumbent on all—cannot be more forcibly recommended than by this circumstance of the miracle before us. Nor, indeed, will it ever be known, till the day of judgment, how many thousand blessings, both temporal and spiritual, have been brought down by the effectual fervent prayers of the faithful on the heads of such as, like the poor paralytick, could not pray for themselves.

And now it might be expected, that Jesus would, by the word of his power, command the sick man immediately to "arise and walk." But, instead of addressing him upon the subject of his bodily disorder, he says to him—"Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." Here was the proof of an able and experienced physician, who would not skin the wound over, but strike directly at the root, and remove the cause of the malady, which was *SIN*. For had

man never *sinned*, he had never been *sick*. Sickness is a part of the curse inflicted on disobedience; and thither the holy psalmist has taught us to recur in all our visitations; saying, “When thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment. Every man, therefore,” because every man has sinned, “is but vanity;” a creature of no stability and strength, but presently fretted and worn down by sickness, as the best and fairest cloth is, when the moth has once got into it. He, therefore, that would be healed of his sickness, should apply for the pardon of his sins. And to whom should he go for a perfect cure of both, but to him who first “said to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee;” and then—“Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house?”

But, alas, the remission of sins by Jesus Christ, though the greatest and most glorious of all the divine mercies, and the ground and foundation of the rest, yet being not, like a cure wrought on the body, outward, and visible, and perceivable by the senses, is often lightly set by and scoffed at by proud and worldly men. As, in the case before us, no sooner had Christ said, “thy sins are forgiven thee,” but “certain of the scribes and pharisees,” who were present, “began to reason in their hearts—Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?” Who, indeed? But does it follow, thou blind and envious pharisee, that he blasphemeth who came into the world, as the law and the prophets foretold he should, to “save his people from their sins,” and who showed himself possessed of almighty power by the works he daily and hourly wrought in the streets of Jerusalem? It is true, doubtless, that God only can forgive sins. But why then is not the only just and right conclusion drawn, *viz.* that he who does forgive them by his own power, and who demonstrates to sense that he does so, by removing the pains and penalties inflicted on their account—that he, I say, is *very God*, though he appears in the form of a man—“God manifest in the flesh, to destroy the works of the devil.”

But such was the exceeding hardness of these men’s hearts, that though Christ vouchsafed them two most convincing proofs of his divinity, yet neither so believed they on him. First, he answered to their *thoughts*, thereby show-



ing himself to be one "who searcheth the hearts and reins," the peculiar prerogative of God.—"Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" Secondly, by releasing the sick man, in a moment, and by a word speaking, from a disease inflicted as a punishment for sin, he demonstrated to all the world the authority and power he had to pronounce the sentence, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." "Whether," says he, "is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and walk?" Both, blessed Jesus, are equally impossible to any one but a God of almighty power, and infinite mercy, who first made man, and then redeemed him. Such, therefore, we acknowledge thee to be who saidst—"That ye may know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins—Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house:" *viz.* You shall see a divine power go along with my words to heal an outward and visible disease of the body, that ye may no longer doubt of the same divine power going along with them to work the inward and spiritual cure of the soul by the remission of sins. Accordingly, no sooner were the words spoken, but the sick man instantly "arose, took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his house," no longer mute, but "glorifying God;" perhaps in the words of the 103d Psalm, for words better adapted to his case cannot be conceived—"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thine infirmities." Can a miracle be more complete, more glorious than this? What have the pharisees to say? Do they yet doubt whether this man's sins are forgiven him, and whether God is in Jesus to forgive them? They are silent, as if the palsy, like Naaman's leprosy cleaving to Gehazi, when it left the man, had seized upon them, and the opening of his mouth had been the closing of theirs. But as our Lord once said, that if his disciples were to be silent, the very stones would cry out, rather than that God should want the honour due unto his name; so though these men, swelling with malice and envy, sat speechless, neither willing to commend, nor able to find fault; yet the hearts of the common people, more generous and open to conviction, were touched at once at seeing the paralytick leap off his bed, whole and sound, and walk away with it upon his shoulders.

“And they were all amazed, and said, We have seen strange things to day—we never saw it on this fashion. And they glorified God:” which, that we may all be the more effectually moved to do, let us,—

Idly. Make an application of this miracle to ourselves.

For it must be considered, that bodily diseases, as they were introduced by sin, so are they pictures and representations of corresponding disorders produced by the same sin in our souls, which thereby became subject to the *fever* of anger, the *dropsy* of covetousness, the *leprosy* of uncleanness, the *lunacy* of ambition, and, among other maladies, to the *palsy* of spiritual sloth and listlessness in things pertaining to the work of our salvation. This is the last of those called “the seven deadly sins;” and when it seizes upon the man, it takes away the use of his powers, and faculties in matters spiritual, exactly as the palsy does in matters temporal. His nerves are unstrung, and he is under an absolute inability to work out his salvation, and walk in the way of God’s commandments. His hands can neither be lifted up to heaven in devotion, or stretched out to the poor in charity. His feet cannot support or carry him forward in a course of holy duties. His tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth, when it should utter prayers or praises to God, or instruct and comfort, reprove, or exhort his neighbour. His understanding likewise is dull and heavy, when the doctrines of salvation are proposed to it; his memory retaineth not divine truths; and the vigour of his spirit is departed. His will is chained down to the creature, nor can by any human means be disengaged from the earth: and what is worst of all, the man labouring under this mental or intellectual palsy, and brought down by it to the gates of eternal death, seems to himself, all the while to thrive and flourish, because he has perhaps, riches, and honours, and pleasures in possession, and can bask himself in the sunshine of this world, saying to his poor soul in this most wretched condition, “Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” But suffer not, O man, the world and the good things thereof, to deceive thee to thy destruction. They may increase the disorder, and hasten thy miserable end. Thy true condition can only be judged of by the state of thy soul. Turn thine eyes inward, and see whether the description just given belongs to it. If it does,

then behold and acknowledge thy picture in “the man sick of the palsy lying on a bed,” and thou wilt presently cry out, if thou art not quite overcome of the distemper, — “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” I answer—yea, thou wilt return answer to thyself, if thou considerest this miracle aright — “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

For, by the wonderful cure wrought upon the body of this poor man, we are taught where to have recourse when the palsy has seized the soul. He who said, “Arise and walk,” said likewise, “Thy sins be forgiven thee;” and his word was with equal power in both cases. Nor is it possible, that he who vouchsafed to heal the more base and ignoble part of man, his body, should neglect his precious and immortal soul. All, therefore, that are spiritually “sick of the palsy” must apply to Christ. No difficulties and discouragements must deter them. Some how or other, they must appear before him, or else they perish. If they are not able to go to him of themselves, by repentance and faith, let them beg the assistance of kind and charitable friends, who may direct and convey them to him, by godly counsel and advice, and by their prayers. More especially, “let them send for the elders of the church,” whose continual employment it is to present sinners to Christ, and who, like the friends of the man sick of the palsy, should never desist from their labour of love, but use an holy violence in their endeavours, till they have laid their patients at the feet of Jesus, and prevailed for a cure. And surely, if the Son of man on earth, in his mortal and afflicted state of humiliation, had power to forgive sins, with how much greater confidence may sinners approach him now, that he has died and risen again for them, and sitteth on the throne of glory and grace, invested with all the rights and powers of a priest and intercessor for evermore? Most certainly, whosoever cometh, or is brought to him, in full faith and confidence of his mercy and power, as GOD THE SAVIOUR, shall in no wise be cast out, but shall be made whole of his plague. He shall hear the voice of Jesus saying to him, by his word, by the absolution of the church, and the testimony of his conscience, through the Holy Ghost—“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house.” And,—

Lastly, my brethren, the reality of the cure of the spiritual palsy will be demonstrated to all the world, exactly as that performed upon the body of the paralytick was, by what followed when Christ had spoken these words to him. Straightway "he arose, took up that whereon he lay, and" (regardless of the censures and calumnies of the scribes and pharisees) "departed to his house, glorifying God," the people around him doing the same. This will be the process with every one, who by the mighty power and infinite mercy of the Redeemer is healed, upon application to him, of his inability to good, his sloth, and listlessness, his criminal attachment to the creature. He will *arise*, forthwith, and as it were, stand upright, showing that he now enjoys the use of his powers and faculties, and is in a posture to execute the will of God. "He who cannot rise and stand upright, but either continues grovelling on the earth, or falls back as soon as he gets up, is not yet cured of his spiritual palsy. The sinner's *bed* is every thing which he loves, and in which he finds his rest and satisfaction upon earth; his criminal inclinations, and the objects of his passions: a true conversion *takes up* and carries away every thing of this nature."\* And, now, being thus arisen, in some sort, from the dead, the man begins to lead a new life, a life of vigour and activity, setting forward in the path of life, the way of God's commandments, to "go to his house," not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Nor will he suffer himself to be stopped in his progress by the sneers, and scoffs, and calumnies of those who have in them the spirit of the scribes and pharisees, and are ever ready to detract from the glory of Christ, and to laugh at the remission of sins, and the conversion of the sinner. None of these things will move the true penitent from his purpose, or prevent his "glorifying God," openly and before men, for his mercy and goodness toward him, in his redemption from the guilt and power of sin through his Saviour Christ, both God and man. The consequence of which will be, that others will be led thereby, to give glory to the God of heaven, for the mighty and wonderful work that he hath done, in restoring health and salvation to a diseased and lost soul. For surely nothing but great blindness of mind, want of faith, and love of this life, can make men rejoice more at a bodily cure, than at the conver-

\* Quesnell.



sion of a soul from sin to righteousness; a work, which is indeed spiritual and invisible, and for that reason, perhaps, the less regarded; but it is a work that far surpasses all the miracles wrought upon matter—a work, to accomplish which, the Son of God died; and to celebrate which, the angels tune their golden harps to everlasting hallelujahs -- “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners:” and “there is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.” Which joy, therefore, let us labour to increase, while it is in our power, by arising from all sloth, and inactivity of spirit, and walking in all holiness and righteousness, without being weary or faint in our minds, until we come to the home and house of eternal rest, through him who says to every true penitent and sincere believer, in the person of the “man sick of the palsy—Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house.” To him, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

## DISCOURSE XLI.

ON THE TWENTY-NINTH OF MAY.

*The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*—Psalm lxxxvii. 2.

WHEN we take a view of the revolutions\* that have happened in the kingdoms of the world, and behold mighty empires successively rising and disappearing again, like so many waves in this great and wide sea, where, exalted for a little season to the highest pitch of grandeur, they glitter

\* Equidem paradoxum quid dixero; et nihil ominis vere: Imperia omnia mundi secundum Dei Providentiam sic fuisse ordinata, ut subservirent consilio Dei erga ecclesiam, nec eorum dissolutionem aut destructionem alio referendam; ut proinde eorum destructio, qualis fuit Persarum, certo fuerit argumentum, illud non satisfecisse consilio Dei erga ecclesiam; nec populum suum ea æquitate, justitia, et indulgentia tractasse, qua par erat.  
—Vitringa Comment. in Zach. i. 20. 203.

in the sunshine of prosperity, till they are overwhelmed and absorbed by the growing power of some neighbouring people, who themselves are scarcely gazed at, before they depart and give way to others, as others did to them, we are led thereby to admire and adore the providence of him who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, who putteth down one and setteth up another, ordering all things according to the counsel of his own will. But when from the scriptures of truth we learn what the counsel of that will is, and how gracious an aspect it bears toward the servants of the true God; when we see all things, even the most untractable, working together for good to them that believe, and the powers of the earth made subservient to the kingdom of the Messiah, in carrying on the divine dispensations of mercy and judgment toward the church, as her obedience pleads for the one, or her transgressions call for the other, how are our hearts filled and warmed with a sense of his goodness, who makes the world, and all the persons and things in it, conspire to promote the felicity of his chosen, who governs the universe as head of his church, who loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

It shall be my endeavour, in the following Discourse, to set before you a succinct view of the divine economy in the government of the world, considered in this light, *viz.* as relative to the affairs of the church. The mercies we this day commemorate will close an induction of particulars, and the use we are to make of them be the natural and obvious result of the whole.

But shall we not be said to aggrandize the church, to think of her more highly than we ought to think, when we thus represent the kings of the earth as ministering unto her, and put all things as it were under her feet? This may be said. But it will be said by none who have duly weighed the difference between things temporal and things eternal, and have learned to give the preference where it is so evidently due. The commission of political government extends no farther than this world. Every man's death dissolves his relation to an earthly kingdom, and all civil distinctions drop into the dust together. But, as says the apostle, *ἡμῶν πολιτευμα*, "our citizenship is in heaven," from whence St. John saw the Christian church, "that holy city, the new Jerusalem, descend," and whither she will

again be received up, nay, whither she is continually ascending, the triumphant part of her, as well as her all-glorious head, being there already. Hence it is, that the church even upon earth is styled "the kingdom of God;" the spirits departed and the faithful who remain being alike the subjects of it, and together making up what the apostle calls the whole family of heaven and earth named after Christ; who, as he now ratifies in heaven the sentence of the church when justly inflicted on earth, so will he one day enable her to "execute judgment" on the angels as well as on this world, seeing her head is Lord of them all. They are not "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; for he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham;" to whom they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who," through the faith of their father Abraham, "are heirs of salvation." What wonder then that we find these exceeding great and precious promises made to the church, with relation to the kingdoms of the earth:—"Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee, and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet, and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore, thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought: for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." Thus glorious are the things spoken of thee, thou city of God. May we not then take up our parable like Balaam, and say—Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel. How shall we degrade her, whom God hath so highly exalted? How shall we lightly esteem her, whom the King of heaven thus delighteth to honour? We cannot do it, until we have forgotten who it was that died to redeem her.

Let none, therefore, be offended, but rather let all greatly rejoice, and glorify God on this behalf, when they find the affairs of the kingdoms and empires of the earth directed

and disposed by an unseen hand in such a manner as may best comport with her interests, for whom the world itself was created, and is preserved. Her foundations, as they are to last when the world is ended, so were they laid before it began, as the scriptures testify, when they tell us, that "we are saved and called according to the divine purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began;" when they assure us, that God "hath chosen us from the beginning;" when they style the gospel "the everlasting covenant," and Christ "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Creation was posterior to the covenant of grace, and the first step in the execution of it. The world was enjoyed but for a little season by man in his state of innocence, and has ever since sympathized with him in the misery of his fall, but is still preserved as the scene on which the mighty work of his redemption is carrying on, until it be finally accomplished. At that day and hour cometh the end. When the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and all the Israel of God shall be saved, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

Nor, indeed, can we proceed far in the sacred history, before we meet with an awful exemplification of this great truth, a stupendous prelude to that final destruction which awaits the world, and to that complete salvation which is then to be wrought for the church. When the earth was defiled by the abominations of its inhabitants, when the sins of men had burst the fountains of the great deep, and opened the windows of heaven, and called forth a deluge to cleanse her from her corruptions; when neither the riches of the wealthy, nor the power of the mighty, nor the wisdom of the wise could save them a single moment from the hand of death;—then appeared the inestimable privileges of the faithful, the incomparable pre-eminence of the church. Small and contemptible as she then seemed, being reduced to the holy family in the ark, yet, safe in the protection of her God, she weathered the storm which laid the world in ruins, and rode in triumph over the wreck of universal nature. New heavens, as it were, and a new earth arose, for her sake, out of the confusion of the old; the covenant was



renewed; she was bid to look upon the rainbow, and remember the promise; the morning stars once more sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

In the dispersion of the nations from Babel, regard was had to the after disposition of things in the Israelitish church; for which reason Moses begins his song with it. "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

Who can read the lives of those fathers of our faith, the ancient patriarchs, "when they were but few men in number, yea, very few, and strangers in the land," without perceiving how highly they were accounted of in the sight of God?—"He suffered no man to do them wrong, yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." They were honoured in the kingdoms through which they passed, as mighty princes of God: when injured, they put to flight, through faith, the armies of aliens; they were suffered to intercede for sinful cities, and such as belonged to the holy family were sent out of the overthrow, when the destruction of those cities, by the enormity of the crimes of the inhabitants, was rendered inevitable: they were made instruments of preserving whole nations alive in the time of dearth, of informing princes concerning the will of heaven, and teaching senators true wisdom; they were revered by crowned heads, and Pharaoh disdained not to receive a blessing from Jacob.

Egypt, at that time one of the most renowned and mighty kingdoms of the earth, was appointed to be the scene, first of the chastisement, and then of the deliverance of the people of God, by a series of the most astonishing miracles that ever were wrought in favour of Israel. A new king arose, who knew not Joseph, but looked with an evil eye on the prosperity of the church, as likely in time to prove detrimental to the state, forgetting that God protects those who protect her. Worldly wisdom chose rather to risk his displeasure by oppressing her, by setting over her taskmasters to afflict her with burdens, and by making the lives of her children bitter with hard bondage. But the sighs and cries of the afflicted church came up before God, and the vengeance of heaven soon demonstrated the folly of the Egypt-

tian politics. The Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and made bare his arm in the defence of his people. The wretched monarch still withstood the power which controlled all the operations of nature, and hardened his heart against the goodness, which by so doing called him to repentance. The event was, as it ever will be in the end, that the church was delivered, and her oppressors destroyed. The Egyptians sank like lead in the mighty waters, while Israel, standing triumphant on the opposite shore, sang hallelujahs to the Lord God omnipotent.

Israel, thus brought out of Egypt, was conducted through the wilderness, the same Lord being her light and her salvation, her support and refreshment, and came to the borders of Canaan, at the precise time when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, and the harvest ready for the sickle. The judgment therefore determined was executed upon them by the sword of Joshua, or rather the sword of God in his hand. For, as it was Jehovah who "overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea," and "led his people through the wilderness," so was it he who "smote great nations, and slew mighty kings, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Basan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan." The promise—"I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," was made good. The power of faith prevailed to the casting down of strong holds, and the blast of the trumpets from the mouths of the priests, sounded by divine command, was sufficient to level the walls of Jericho.

After the settlement of the people in the promised inheritance, the nations around them were, from time to time, made the instruments of punishing them when they rebelled against the Lord their God. When they returned to him, his favour returned to them, the light of his countenance quickly dispelled the darkest clouds of public calamity, and brake forth upon them by the means of deliverers raised up to chastise the insolence of their enemies, and restore peace and prosperity to Israel. But the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, of Jephthah, and of David, who, having subdued all his enemies, left his son Solomon in a manner, universal monarch over the whole earth, all the kings of which, as it is said in the book of Chronicles, sought his presence. And, indeed, the glory of his reign so far exceeds that of any which we hear of before or after it, that Israel

in his days seems intended to give us some idea of the church triumphant, as she will appear when, the last enemy being vanquished, and death swallowed up in victory, the Son of David shall manifest himself in the New Jerusalem as the Prince of peace, and reign for ever and ever, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

From this time, we find the Almighty employing in their turns, the four great monarchies, to protect or annoy, to cherish or chastise the church, as there was occasion. And we hear him making in effect, by his prophets, the same declaration concerning each of them, that he made before by the mouth of Moses concerning Pharaoh.—“In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared through all the earth.”

The idolatries and iniquities of the ten tribes, consequent upon their defection from the house of David, and the temple at Jerusalem, called for vengeance. And lo! the Assyrian stands ready to execute it, waiting only for the divine command. At the time appointed it is given. The Lord lifteth up an ensign to the nations from afar, and mustereth the hosts to the battle, making them the weapons of his indignation to destroy the whole land. Because the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight. They returned no more to that pleasant land, nor saw again their native country. What a fine instance does the Assyrian afford us of the manner in which Providence, using the instrumentality of man's free choice foreseen, causes all the schemes of worldly politicians to work together for the accomplishment of his designs, while they are only attending to their own interests! For thus God states this matter, once for all, by his prophet Isaiah—“O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.” The proud Assyrian knew not what Isaiah could have told

him, that "when the Lord had performed" by him "his whole work," of correcting his people, he would "punish his stout heart, and the glory of his high looks;" nor saw the absurdity of "the axe boasting itself against him that heweth therewith." View him before the walls of Jerusalem, at the head of an army presumed to be invincible, opening his mouth in blasphemy against God, and already rioting in the fancied possession and spoil of the holy city. But the time was not yet come. A prince filled the throne who knew where to have recourse for assistance, and how to engage heaven on his side. Therefore "the virgin, the daughter of Zion, despised" the tyrant, "and laughed him to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem shook her head at him." Suddenly, in the dark and silent hour of midnight, without noise or violence, the flower of the Assyrian army is cut off at a stroke. The Almighty puts his hook in the nose, his bridle in the lips of the blaspheming infidel, and leads him back disarmed, like a wild beast taken in the toils, the contempt and hissing of those nations, who had so lately trembled at his power and majesty.

But at length Judah's hour came. The transgressions of her kings, of her priests, and of her people, which had made the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint, required a strong and efficacious medicine. Her corruptions were become such as could not be purged away but by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, and she was to drink deep of the cup of the Lord's fury. The haughty and terrible Nebuchadnezzar was the person appointed to administer it, and she drank it off to the dregs. Jerusalem is laid in ashes, and her children go into captivity. In the school of affliction they are taught the lesson of repentance. By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept, wept over the miseries of the church, and the sins that caused them; yea they wept when they remembered Zion, when they remembered what she had been, and saw what she was. Desolate and forlorn, she now sits upon the ground who was once exalted above all the earth, and calls to the whole world to see if ever there was sorrow like her sorrow, and to receive instruction by her fall. Her lamentations by the mouth of Jeremiah are recorded for the use of all who may find themselves in the like circumstances, if they prove not sufficient to prevent men from falling into them. Yet



even here God left not himself without witness, nor his church without honour. The irresistible monarch, whose pride made him ready to propose himself as an object of worship to all people, and nations, and languages, falls down at the feet of a Jew; Daniel is made first of the presidents, and a prophet rules in the province of Babylon; while the abasement of that prince, by the judgment of God, even to the condition of the beasts of the fields, seemed to prognosticate the fall of the empire, which came to pass in the days of his grandson.

For now, Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees excellency, having performed the task allotted her, was to be overthrown as Sodom and Gomorrah; the staff wherewith the Lord had smitten so many nations, the hammer which had broken the whole earth to pieces, was to be itself cut asunder, and broken, and the sceptre of the world transferred to the second great monarchy, that of the Medes and Persians. To this end we see raised up a prince with a disposition calculated to conciliate the affections of all nations, improved and trained up in a discipline which has been the admiration of every age since, reducing to practice all the maxims of political wisdom which he had been taught, and prosperous in all his undertakings, until by the taking of Babylon he had brought down to the ground, and laid low in the dust, that insolent spirit which characterised the Chaldean empire. This transaction profane history relates at large. But the drift of Providence in it had never been known, if the scriptures had not opened to us, through the divine economy in this affair, a prospect terminated by the restoration of the church of God, who saith of Cyrus, many hundred years before his birth, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built—and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price, nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts. For Jacob my servant's sake, and for Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me." Accordingly, in the very "first year of his reign" (after having been showed, as we must suppose, by Daniel, whom he found in the court of Babylon, these

prophecies of Isaiah concerning himself), "he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me, and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up." For this cause, therefore, was the Persian monarchy suffered to be erected, because Jehovah was become gracious unto his land, and had determined to make Cyrus his instrument in bringing back the captivity of Jacob.

But, in process of time, this empire having begun, under the tyrant Ochus, to persecute the church, which it had till then protected, was not long after broken in pieces by the king of Græcia, or Alexander the Great, the founder of the third monarchy, whose fury against Jerusalem, for refusing the succours he demanded, was on a sudden, at the sight of the high priest coming forth in his vestments at the head of a procession to meet him, turned into a reverence for the temple, and an admiration of the prophecies; in which, seeing himself plainly portrayed, he marched on against Darius to certain victory; and having thus performed the work for the execution of which God had raised him up, was thrown aside as a withered rod, dying at Babylon in the thirty-third year of his age. The carrying away of the Jews to the number of one hundred thousand into Egypt, under Ptolemy Lagos, one of his successors, and the cruelties of Antiochus Epiphanes, a descendant of another of them, served only, the former to diffuse the knowledge of the God of Israel among the nations, preparatory to their conversion by the gospel; the latter, to manifest the power of that God, and to call forth the glories of the Asmonean family.\*

In their days, as we find by the book of Maccabees, the first league was made with the Roman power, which was ere long to constitute the fourth and last monarchy, and was now grown strong enough to protect the church against the kings of Syria, as it did for many years. But when the Jews had forsaken the God of their fathers to go after their own traditions, and had at length filled up the measure of their iniquities by rejecting their Messiah, after he had

\* See Vitringa, in Zach. p. 205.

accomplished all their prophecies, crucifying the Lord of glory, and persecuting his apostles, the spirit of life passed from the law into the gospel, and left their religion a breathless carcass: directed by heaven, the Roman eagles flew to the prey, and Jerusalem was destroyed with a destruction which astonished the soul of Titus himself, and hath made the ears of every one that hath heard it to tingle from that day to this.\* The Roman empire, which, by uniting all nations under its government, prepared the way for the universality of the true religion, having thus been by turns the protector and exterminator of the Jewish, the persecutor and the defender of the Christian church, was itself, like all the empires that had gone before it, broken in pieces, first by its division into eastern and western, then by an inundation of the barbarians subdividing it into these western kingdoms, which, though changing occasionally by small accessions or diminutions, still subsist; and, lastly, by the Mahometan power, raised up to be the Pharaoh, the Nebuchadnezzar, and the Antiochus Epiphanes of these last days to the eastern churches. And if the princes of this western division shall go on to weaken and destroy each other, while nothing is done to revive the spirit and power of the gospel in Christendom (for when they are departed, a mere name will avail us as little as it did the Jews, or the Greek Christians), may it not be feared that the western empire will one day follow the fate of the eastern, and the crescent be seen flying on the towers of Vienna, as well as on those of Constantinople? Since it seems hardly to admit of a doubt, that the Mahometan empire is the last and great anti-christian power raised and supported to be the scourge of apostate Christians; which, when it shall have performed the task allotted it, the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming; when the kingdoms of this world shall finally become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and the superiority of his church over them all shall be as visible as it is certain.

\* The gospel, receiving strength from every successive persecution, at length conquered the conquerors of the world; the despised and ignominious cross of the poor afflicted Galilean was engraved upon the foreheads of princes, and became the great ornament and glory of the imperial diadem.—“Causes of the Fall of the Roman empire,” Bossuet ii. 184.

Thus, by going into the sanctuary of God, we see the end of all earthly glory, and behold the empires of the world passing swiftly by us, and vanishing away, to give place to that kingdom which shall endure for ever: while God, by suffering them to continue no longer than he had occasion to employ them in the service of the church, gives us a clear evidence that they were raised up for this end. It is here that we are to look for the secret spring of all victories and overthrows; here we are to search after the true cause of the rise and ruin of states; which, with the renowned conductors of them, whether in peace or in war, are but so many instruments in the hand of Heaven, to execute its designs of mercy or judgment on the church, and on each other in subordination to her, as they respectively, from time to time, become the objects of either, according to the uniform tenor of the divine economy from the beginning to the end of the world.

With regard to this nation in particular, and the manner in which the designs of Providence concerning the church have been brought about by the revolutions that have happened in the state, it is obvious to observe, that as the conquest of Britain by the Romans opened a way for the gospel to visit it at first, so the invasion of it afterward by the Saxons, who having overcome the sinful inhabitants, were themselves converted to the faith by Austin, became a means of the revival and re-establishment of that gospel. At the head of the many blessings since bestowed upon us will that of this day for ever stand in the estimation of all those who have pleasure in the prosperity of Sion; who love to behold her in her apostolical form and comeliness, as she appeared in the days of old, and in the years that are past, before schism had mangled and heresy defaced the beauty of holiness. In God's dealings with the church of England, restored as at this time by the restoration of the royal family, we behold an epitome of his former proceedings with regard to the church in general. We behold a power raised up to afflict and chastise her, and then destroying itself to pave the way for her deliverance and recovery. But some circumstances there are which distinguish this dispensation, and deserve to be carefully marked. The avenger came not upon us from without, but arose from amongst ourselves. It was not an open enemy that did us this dishonour, for then



we could have borne it. The sorrow only had then been ours. But, alas, the guilt was so too. The assault was made not, as formerly, by heathen and infidel powers, in professed opposition to the gospel, but by some who (if the people would take their word for it) were the only true gospel preachers; and who, by a strange inversion of scripture, having appropriated to themselves the character of the Israel of God, applied all the prophecies concerning Egypt, Babylon, and the other enemies of Israel, to the church and the monarchy. The grand secret of this most detestable enthusiasm (and indeed the case is the same with every other species of it) was the art of setting up Christ against his own laws, and superseding external ordinances by fanciful internal revelations. The truth is, a spirit of schism and a spirit of faction meeting in the same hearts, formed at this period of time a set of the most accomplished rebels against the kingdom and priesthood of Jesus Christ, as delegated to his representatives in church and state. But the battery raised for the demolition of both was masked with such an hypocrisy as the world never saw before, nor it is to be hoped will ever see again. Under the words *liberty* and *reformation* lay concealed the mine which at length blew up the constitution from its foundations. Mankind beheld with astonishment the parliamentary cannon pointed against the king, for the security of his person; the Christian church overturned to introduce the reign of Jesus; and the saints, as they blasphemously styled themselves, inheriting the earth, instead of its right owners, to show their heavenly mindedness. Then the mystery of iniquity stood unfolded, and the eyes of the unwary, who had at first followed Absalom in the simplicity of their hearts, were opened. But it was too late. They could only reflect (and teach their children to reflect in time) upon the truth of the Wise Man's aphorism, and the excellency of the advice grounded upon it.—“The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with.” They plainly discerned that he who said, “let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,” understood the nature of government, and knew upon what principles alone it could be supported; since the remedy of rebellion proved (as it always will) to be infinitely worse than the disease of mal-administration; and the little finger of a commonwealth was found to be

heavier than the loins of monarchy ; the nation (besides the destruction of the best of churches, and the unparalleled murder of the best of kings), having suffered more, beyond all comparison, in the space of twenty years, from the tyranny of the pretended patriots, than from the despotism of all the princes who had ever worn the imperial crown of England. But as the infatuated selfwilledness of rebels disposes them to suffer, so the justice of God generally ordains that they shall suffer more and worse things from the usurper whom they themselves set up, than they ever could have done from their lawful sovereign ; and, accordingly, they who dashed in pieces the gracious sceptre of a Stuart, were scourged with the iron rod of a Cromwell.

But this rod of the oppressor, when by it the Lord had visited the transgressions of his people, was at length broken. The prayers of the faithful remnant prevailed ; and he who created and preserves the world for the sake of his church ; he who secured her in the ark, when the flood came, and watched over her in the families of the holy patriarchs ; he who brought her forth out of Egypt, led her through the wilderness, settled her in the promised inheritance, and made her to be the glory of the whole earth ; he who raised up Cyrus to deliver her from the power of Babylon ; who turned the heart of Alexander in her favour ; who went forth with Judas and his brethren to the battle against the armies of Antiochus ; and bade the sword of Constantine conquer under the banner of the *cross* ; the same Lord, who is rich unto all that call upon him, because his mercy endureth for ever, heard the groanings of the church of England under her captivity ; and having sent a spirit of dissension and confusion amongst the builders of the schismatical and republican Babel, he opened the eyes of the people to see that there was only one way of putting a period to the miseries of their country ; and at a time when it was least hoped for, and by an instrument least suspected, he bowed the hearts of the whole nation as the heart of one man, “ so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.” So the king returned, and the church was delivered out of the hands of her enemies. Therein we do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. Nor shall the voice of praise grow cold in our mouths, though an hundred years are now elapsed since the day when this mercy was vouchsafed unto

us; but seeing that thereby we have once more beheld Sion in her beauty, we will give thanks unto our Lord God, as if the king had this morning made his triumphant entry amidst the acclamations of his exulting subjects, “impatient” (as the noble historian expresses it) “to fill their eyes with a beloved spectacle, of which they had been so long deprived.”

The result of the whole is this. If the Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, so should we. If, in the revolutions of states and empires, his eyes are upon the church, ours should be there too, according to the example set us by the faithful of old time; who, being led into captivity, “wept when they remembered Sion;” being redeemed therefrom, “were glad when” their brethren “said unto them, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” If God’s dealings with a people are regulated by their dealings with his church, then the state of the church is always the best criterion whereby to judge of the true state of the nation where she is planted; and there are no greater enemies to their country, than those who endeavour to alienate the minds of kings from her; since he who cannot lie hath said concerning her, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. Those that honour me, I will honour; and such as despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Let them all be confounded and turned back, that hate Sion.” For her prosperity, therefore, we and all the world ought to pray, as the psalmist most earnestly entreateth every one of us to do.—“O pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” because, “they shall prosper that love thee.” *Peace*, then, O thou city of God, the peace of union and charity, “be within thy walls, and plenteousness” of grace and glory “within thy palaces.” And while we thus pray for the church with our lips, let it be our unfeigned endeavour to adorn her by our lives. So shall we make the proper return for the mercies we have received; so shall we draw down more and more of the divine favour continually upon our king, and our country, the university, and ourselves; so shall we convince the world of this great and important truth, that the Christian is the loyal subject, and the churchman the true patriot.

## DISCOURSE XLII.

## THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.*—John viii. 7.

A WRITER of great note in the philosophical and medical world tells us, that he never saw a criminal dragged to execution, without asking himself, “Who knows whether this man is not less blamable than I am?” A question which we should all of us do well to ask ourselves, when we hear of, or see any person brought to shame and punishment for sin. The sufferings of others might thus turn greatly to our advantage, by humbling and leading us likewise to repent of our transgressions, which, perhaps, equally deserve the rod, and escape only by not being known. On the contrary, the falls of our brethren too often produce no other effect in us, than pride and uncharitableness. We are pleased to think it is not so bad with us, and criticise without mercy upon characters which, take them for all in all, are perhaps not worse than our own. What the behaviour of people generally is upon such an occasion, and what it should be, we are shown in the chapter of which the text is a part, where we read of a person taken in a grievous offence, and brought by the scribes and pharisees to Christ. I shall therefore go over this whole history, and make some suitable remarks on each part of it.

As our Lord was teaching in the temple, “the scribes and pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.”

There is in human nature (however we are to account for it) a great curiosity to discover, and an equal desire to publish, the faults and infirmities of others. Some spend half their time in inquiring and listening after all that is stirring



in this way. Not a breath of wind but strikes their ear, if it be loaded with scandal. And then, when once they have heard a story, which demolishes a reputation, how eager they are to make it known to their acquaintance. Tidings like these are frequently uttered, with as much joy and triumph, as if the event were the best that ever befel the utterers in their lives. But how is this? Are they the better for their neighbour's crimes; or can they really take a pleasure in the thought, that a fellow creature, and one of the same religion, has been seduced to offend God, and is in danger, without his grace, of perishing eternally? Does this delight their hearts, and make their eyes sparkle? Evil spirits rejoice at the fall and destruction of mankind; but angels mourn, and so should we. Let them suppose their own relations or themselves in the same situation, and then see how their behaviour appears; and let them learn, that sin, which pierced the heart of their Saviour upon the cross, can afford no matter of joy and triumph to any of his disciples. Let them be as diligent in searching after their own sins, to confess and amend them, as they have been in searching out those of their neighbours, to publish and expose them. They will find work enough, and work that will reward their labour.

“This woman (say the scribes and pharisees) was taken in adultery,” a foul and deadly transgression, but not the only one in the world. When we see the woman “standing in the midst,” put to open shame, and hear these men accusing her, what holy and good men are we led to think them? What haters of sin? How zealous for God and religion? They, to be sure, are quite pure, and meek, and pious, and charitable. Alas! how mistaken should we be, if we thus judged of them! Some pains, doubtless, have been employed to whitewash the sepulchres, and the outsides of them make a very creditable appearance. But let us only approach, and uncover them, and we shall soon be taught, that it is not always safe to *judge according to appearance*. For this wretched criminal is brought forth, not for the punishment of sin, and the glorification of God, —but merely to lay a trap for Christ, that he might be accused, persecuted, and put to death.

“Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned. But what sayest thou?” The design was, to set

Moses and Christ at variance, and they thought they had laid their snare in such a manner that Christ must fall into it, either way. For if he contradicted Moses, by ordering the woman to be released, they would have set him down for a false prophet; and if, with Moses, he sentenced her to death, he must have acted contrary to his character of a merciful Saviour. So you see, these scribes and pharisees, while they were clamouring for vengeance against adultery, forgot there were any such sins as envy, hatred, and malice, and perceived not that they themselves were all the time in the gall of bitterness. The woman had broken one commandment; but these, her accusers, were overturning the foundations of the whole law, mercy, justice, and truth. So easy is it for men who are not upon their guard, even while they are exerting themselves against some kinds of sins, to run into others; nor indeed can we be greatly surprised, that they, who give up their whole attention to the concerns of their neighbours, should sometimes a little neglect their own.

The sight of a sinner discovered and brought to shame, might be a very useful and improving sight to those who behold it. But men have several ways of making it to themselves an occasion of falling.

Some think it a proper subject of laughter; and Solomon tells us who they are—not remarkable for their *wisdom*—"Fools," says he, "make a mock at sin." For what is there in sin to make a mock at? It is thought a very serious matter in heaven, and will be found so in hell. Why then should it be made a jest of upon earth? It ruined mankind, and brought death into the world. And is there any thing humorous in that consideration? As little merriment can there be in the nature of confession and repentance, whereby the sinner is delivered from the wrath to come. In the primitive ages, such a subject was never touched upon without concern and grief. But now, people have much ado to keep their countenances, and forbear laughing. So strangely are the times altered; in other words, ignorance has taken place of knowledge, and folly sits in the throne of wisdom.

Others there are, who, when they hear of a sinner discovered and exposed, bless themselves to think, how good and righteous they are; ready to cry out, with the Pharisee,—"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are."

May be not; though we have only your own word for it, which many, perhaps, will not take. You are not indeed brought to shame or punishment; but, have you never deserved to be so? Recollect a little. If not, have you ever been in the same circumstances of temptation? or, are you sure, that, in those circumstances, you should not have fallen? Who is it that hath preserved you all this time? Give the glory to God, and learn to have pity, like him, on those, whose strength failed in the day of trial. Otherwise, under the show of great zeal for virtue and religion, you may display as much pride, uncharitableness, and hypocrisy, as the scribes and pharisees did of old, when they brought the woman before our Saviour, only that they might ensnare him.

But let us not be deceived as they were. God is not mocked. He knew their craft, and saw through their design. Their hearts were open to him, and he viewed distinctly all that was passing there. It was not his intention to destroy the law of Moses, for he came to fulfil it; nor would he condemn sinners, for he came to save them. At the same time, he would teach these men, that there were sins known to God, which the law did not reach to punish here, and that those ought to be avoided as well as these; since there was nothing secret which would not be known at the last day: that people who were fond of accusing and punishing others, or of seeing them accused and punished, should, therefore, look at home, and examine how matters stood in their own breasts, how they should like to have the story of their lives told aloud, and the thoughts of their hearts revealed to the world. This would soon cure that desire, with which so many are infected, of knowing and publishing the faults of their neighbours; it would make them treat their weak and fallen brethren, as they themselves would wish to be treated by the Judge of all the earth.

Such being our Saviour's intention, he seemed at first to take no notice of what was said, but, stooping down, he wrote with his finger on the ground. They now thought they had perplexed him, and that he knew not how to answer their question. They pressed him, therefore, more earnestly, and continued asking till at length he raised himself, and thus addressed them—"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

As if he had said, in other words—"You have brought before me a person taken in a grievous crime, and you tell me, Moses in the law commanded, that such should be stoned. If he did command this, why do you come to me? Truly, for no reason, but to tempt and ensnare me. You would appear to be good and holy men, haters of sin, zealous for the honour of God and his law. But your design all the while is to entrap, to persecute, and slay me, an innocent person, sent from God to be your prophet, your priest, and your king, the promised Messiah, the Saviour of Israel. The woman, it is true, is a sinner; but her accusers are no saints; and the world is imposed upon, when it takes them for such. I know the rottenness of your hearts, and can, when I will, show it to others. I shall not condemn the woman myself, for it is not mine office. You may do it, if you will affirm yourselves to be those righteous men which you desire to be accounted. But this you dare not do before me, a person who, as you well know, can prove the contrary, and give the bystanders such a history of what you have been, and what you are, as will make you ashamed to show your faces. And therefore it is, that I challenge and defy you to proceed—He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." This said, Christ returned to his former employment of writing upon the ground, leaving the medicine, which he had administered, to perform its operation.

And now, behold the mighty force of a few words—"They which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the least; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." What? Are these godly persons gone? all gone? and is the work, upon which they came, left unfinished? It is even so. The criminal alone remains to be seen; her accusers are fled. And reason good. They found there was one ready to accuse them in their turn; they perceived that "all things were naked and open before him with whom they had to do;" and they had no mind to have him lay open their hearts, and read a lecture upon them before the people. Their consciences told them what sort of a lecture that must needs be; and therefore, rather than provoke him to read it, they very prudently made the



best of their way out of the temple, and left him to condemn or absolve the woman, as he should think fit.

Whenever, therefore, you find yourselves tempted to be severe upon a neighbour's failings, call to mind what passed between our Lord and the pharisees. Busy in bringing to light the sins of another, they had entirely forgotten their own; they reflected not, how very unfit they were to be the woman's accusers; they thought not what would become of themselves, when God should arise to judgment. And here is the great misfortune. Heaven has given to every man his portion of work, and every man is doing the work of his brother, instead of that which belongeth to himself. We are all naturally disposed to entertain a pretty good opinion of ourselves. A careful and constant examination of our ways might chance to spoil that good opinion, and is, for that reason, a task which we are very backward in entering upon. But we feel no such pain in examining the ways of our neighbour, and finding him faulty; on the contrary, we are too apt to take pleasure in a comparison, sure to be made to our own advantage. But then we are all the while deceived in imagining that our sins are, and will be unknown, because we are able, for the present, to hide them from the world about us. The pharisees, accusing the woman in the temple, though they stood quite secure in the characters which, by a little outward decency, they had acquired, of virtuous and holy men; when lo, on a sudden, they perceived one present, who was privy to all they had been secretly doing and thinking; one who was able to draw their true characters at full length, whenever he pleased, and thereby expose them to mankind, as a set of hypocrites.

And can we be regardless (for ignorant we cannot be) of the presence of the same divine person amongst us? To him all hearts are open, all desires known; he knoweth our down-sitting, and our up-rising, and understandeth our thoughts long before; he is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. From him bolts and bars cannot secure us, darkness cannot hide our doings; for the darkness is no darkness with him; the night as clear as the day. Before him lies the register of our lives, in which is noted every thing we have done, every thing we have said, and every thing we have imagined. Should he again appear in the *temple*, and from these eternal records "reprove us,

and set" our secret sins "in order before us," who could abide it, or stay to hear the accusation out? He might once more be *left alone*.

Nor let us forget, that, although our God walketh not upon earth to teach and to reprove, as formerly he did in the flesh, ye hath he placed in every breast a representative of himself, to sit in judgment, to condemn, or to absolve. *Conscience* is always present, standing by, and taking an account of our proceedings, when we think not of it. Great endeavours are used to buy off and to silence this witness. Half the pleasures and amusements of the world are invented and followed, only to drug it, and lay it asleep. And, for a time, they seem to have the desired effect. Old sins appear to be gone and forgotten. While health and prosperity last, the man goes on smoothly, saying to himself, with Agag,—"Surely, the bitterness of death is past;" till at length, the lion is roused, and let loose upon him, the minister of vengeance seizeth him, and "heweth him in pieces," when the word is given from above. Such a word was that of Christ to the pharisees, which could not have affected them, if conscience had not heard and understood it. Awaked by the sound, it started from its slumbers, and, as the officer of justice, apprehended them, when they least expected it. Self-accused, self-convicted, self-condemned, they gave all up, and disappeared. Great indeed is the power of conscience, when once it is set to work by him, who planted it in the bosom of man. Nothing can withstand it. From the moment it is alarmed, and begins to show a man to himself, it will find him so much employment, that he will have little leisure, and less inclination, to turn accuser of his brethren, or to dwell upon, and aggravate their offences. Go into the chamber of him whom sickness and sorrow have brought to a sense of his sins. See with what humility he confesses them, with what earnestness he supplicates for pardon; how entirely taken up he is in settling the affairs of his own soul, and making his peace with God. Tell him that such a neighbour hath fallen into a grievous sin, he will lament, pity, and pray for him. Try to *entertain* and *divert* him upon such a subject, he will think you a wretch not fit to be conversed with, and order you from his presence. - To go one step farther. Suppose the last day to be now come. Imagine you see the Judge upon his throne, the

generations of mankind assembled before him, and the books opened, out of which we are all to be judged. Who, in that situation, would have any appetite to revile, insult, or laugh at the transgressions of the man that stood next him? Whose thoughts would not be employed upon his own case? Who would not be anxious to obtain his own pardon, and leave God to deal as he thought fit with others, hoping and praying, that he would be merciful to them likewise? To this temper death and judgment will certainly bring us all: and we must blame ourselves, if in this temper they do not find us.

Having thus despatched the pharisees, the woman alone remains. She was detained in the temple by the same principle, which caused the others to depart—consciousness of guilt. This kept her fixed, after her accusers were gone; not daring to stir, till she heard sentence pronounced by Christ, before whom she stood. At length,—“Woman,” said he to her, raising himself from the ground, on which he had been writing, “where are those, thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” We are not to think by this, that our Lord meant to excuse guilt, to be the patron of sin, or to find fault with the law of Moses, which was the law of God. By that law, adultery was to be punished with death. But the sentence could not be passed without accusers and witnesses, who were all fled. Proper magistrates must pass it; and had they done so, Christ had not interposed to hinder the execution of justice. But they having not condemned her, whose proper office it was, no more would Christ, whose office it was not, as he told the brethren who came to him about the division of an inheritance, “Man, who made me a judge and a divider?” He was no temporal magistrate, but came into the world in a very different quality, that of a spiritual Saviour. With respect to the law, he left every thing as it was; he neither condemned, nor absolved the woman. But, as the publisher of the gospel, and the author of salvation, he directed her how to obtain the pardon of heaven, and eternal life, *viz.* by so truly repenting of her sin, as never to return to it again—“Go, and sin no more.” Despair not, therefore, O thou, whosoever thou art, whom temptation hath drawn into sin: thou art in the hands of

one, who desireth not the death of a sinner; of one who died for thy sake, to procure thee forgiveness, grace, and glory. Return to him, pray to him, love him, and serve him, all the remaining days of thy life. Let the remembrance of what is past teach thee, how bitter are the fruits of sin—fear, sorrow, shame, and confusion; and henceforth learn by experience (for nothing else can truly inform thee) how sweet are the fruits of righteousness—peace, and hope, and joy, and holy confidence. So shall thy brethren receive thee, as one alive from the dead, and rejoice, because the sheep, that went astray, and was lost, is now found again. Nay, what is infinitely more, angels themselves will take up their golden harps, and join in celebrating that mercy which hath effected thy conversion.—“There is joy in heaven, among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.”

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## DISCOURSE XLIII.

### ON THE PURIFICATION.

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*And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.—Luke ii. 22.*

AMONG the many advantages we enjoy in these seats of learning and religion, it may surely be deemed one, that an honourable respect is paid to those sacred festivals, which the church of England, in her wisdom, has thought proper to retain. They are few, and they are important: so few, that the necessary prosecution of secular business is not too much broken in upon; so important, that nothing seems to have been appointed in vain. They compose a celestial circle, of which Christ is the centre: his first and faithful friends from the circumference, reflecting back on him the glory received from him. They visit us in their annual course, with messages from above, each teaching us some-



thing to believe, and, in consequence, something to do. They bring repeatedly to our remembrance truths, which we are apt to forget: they secure to us little intervals of rest from worldly cares, that our hearts with our hands may be lifted up to God in the heavens: they revive our zeal and fervour in performing the offices of religion: they cheer the heart with sentiments of gratitude and thankfulness: they confirm us in habits of obedience to the institutions of the church and the injunctions of our superiors: they stir us up to an imitation of those who have gone before us in the way of holiness: they minister an occasion to our children, of inquiring into the meaning of their institution; and afford us an opportunity of explaining the several doctrines and duties of Christianity, to which they refer: in short, to use the words of the excellent Hooker, "they are the splendour and outward dignity of our religion, forcible witnesses of ancient truth, provocations to the exercises of all piety, shadows of our endless felicity in heaven, on earth everlasting records and memorials; wherein they, who cannot be drawn to hearken unto that we teach, may, only by looking upon that we do, in a manner read whatever we believe. Well to celebrate these religious and sacred days, is to spend the flower of our time happily."\*

Let us, therefore, arrest the festival of the day, and detain it, while we learn from it those useful lessons it is prepared to teach, concerning the purification of the blessed virgin; the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple; the sacrifice offered upon the occasion; and the behaviour of Simeon and Anna.

If we look into the law of Moses, we find it ordained, that the woman who had borne a male child, for forty days thence ensuing (a period, for whatever reason, often fixed on, in cases of humiliation), was to be accounted impure, to touch no hallowed thing, nor to approach the sanctuary. At the expiration of that term, she was to repair, for the first time, to the temple, and there to have an atonement made for her by the priest.

With respect to the whole class of those incidents and maladies to which the body is subject, thus regarded in the eye of the divine law is unclean; from the nature of the ordinance itself, as well as from numberless passages in the

\* Ecclesiastical Polity, v. 71.

writings of the prophets, and more especially in the New Testament, it should seem evident, that something farther was intended than may at first sight appear. "The law stood," among other things, "in divers outward washings and cleansings." But may it not be here asked, as in another instance, "Doth God take care for these? Or saith he it not for our sake?" Hath he not enjoined such external rites, for the sake of conveying by them to future ages and generations, no less than to those then present, some truths of universal use and importance?

Of one thing we are all well assured. That alone which renders man and the creation otherwise than acceptable in the sight of their Maker, is sin. That alone which can reinstate them in his favour, is the redemption by Christ. By means of the former, we are affirmed to have become "corrupted, polluted, defiled, unclean;" by the instrumentality of the latter, we are said to be "purged, purified, washed, cleansed"—terms all borrowed from the legal ceremonies, at once explaining them, and being explained by them.

Could the shadow of a doubt remain upon this head, it must be dispersed by that full, direct, express declaration, which the apostle has made, in the 9th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; persons, who, if their education had been what it ought to have been, would have known these things, and not needed that any man should teach them.

"The first tabernacle was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them till the time of reformation. But Christ being come, an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For, if the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the

living God? Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. It was, therefore, necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

It seems impossible, that, by any paraphrase, or commentary, these words can be rendered plainer than they are in themselves.

To apply, therefore, this general reasoning of the apostle to the ceremony of the day, the purification of women after childbirth, under the law; if it be asked, what such ceremony was intended to import? can a better answer be given to the question, than that which is given by the standard writer on the festivals of our church?

"It imports, that, since Adam's fall, we are conceived in sin; that our birth is impure; that we derive from our parents an hereditary stain, whereby we are naturally unclean, and children of wrath; and, to show the contagion thereof, not only the child was circumcised, but the mother also was cleansed by a sacrifice for sin."

But here, the difficulty may be thought rather increased, than diminished; since nothing of this kind could hold good respecting the Blessed Virgin, and "that holy thing which was born of her," and justly called, "The Son of God." The morning of his birth was indeed "a morning without clouds." No spot then sullied the face of heaven. Why, therefore, must such a mother, and such a son, pay obedience to the law? The Son paid obedience, as when he submitted to be circumcised, and to be baptized; not that he had any sin to be put off, or washed away, but because, being "made of a woman, and made under the law," it became him to obey the law; or, as he expressed it to John, who proposed the question at his baptism, "to fulfil all righteousness." In himself he was not a sinner; but in our stead, he was content to appear as such. The Holy Virgin placed herself, upon this occasion, on a level with other women, when she was so much above them, to exhibit a pattern of humility and obedience, of gratitude and devotion, of regard and reverence for the ordinances of God,

which no one is privileged to neglect or slight, but which all should attend, however they may fancy themselves not to need, or not to be benefited by them. Indeed, who can have the confidence and presumption to absent themselves from the temple, when they behold Mary there, whom all generations have agreed to call Blessed! Let mothers, when, in the day of thanksgiving, they approach the altar, set before them her bright example; and let us remember, that, by her becoming a mother, we are become the heirs of everlasting salvation; joint heirs with him who was, as at this time, presented in the temple.

“When the days of her purification were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord: as it is written in the law of the Lord;—Every male that openeth the womb, shall be called holy to the Lord.”

Great were the privileges from the beginning annexed to the first-born. Theirs was the pre-eminence in power and wealth; and, before the designation of the sons of Levi to the service of the altar, among the people of God, theirs was the priesthood also. After that event, they still continued, as before, heirs of a double honour and inheritance; they were still offered in form to God, though redeemed, at a certain price, from actual attendance in the sanctuary. Agreeably to this injunction, Jesus was brought by his mother at the proper time, and presented in the temple, as her first-born. He filled up the character, and highly exalted it. Besides being her first-born son, he was likewise *πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως*, the first-begotten, or first-born of the whole creation, not only because he *εστι, is, προ παντων*, before all things, and all things, both in heaven and earth, were created by him, but also because he was begotten to inherit all things, and in all things to have the pre-eminence, since all things were created *εις αυτον*, for him, as well as *δι αυτου*, by him;\* in which view he is styled absolutely, *τον πρωτοτοκον*, THE First-born,† uniting in himself all that was from the beginning prefigured by the rights and honours of primogeniture. He is styled, moreover, *πρωτοτοκος εκ των νεκρων*, the *first-born*, or *first-begotten from the dead*, in regard of his being the first that rose from the dead, no more to die. And, with allusion to the peculiar appropriation of all the first-born to God, the

\* Col. i. 15, &c.

† Heb. i. 6.



assembly of redeemed spirits is called, “the church of the first-born, written,” or “enrolled, in heaven.”

“The Blessed Virgin (says Bishop Taylor) had received a greater favour than ever was received by the daughters of Adam; and knowing from whence, and for whose glory she had received it, she returns the Holy Jesus as a gift to God again; for she had nothing—the world had nothing—so precious as himself, of which to make an oblation. Never was there before an act of adoration proportionable to the honour and majesty of the great God. But now there was; and it was made, at the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple.”

Let *us* not fail, by using them aright, to return to God all things we have received from him; and, by a virtuous education, dedicate our children to him who gave them, bringing them early to the temple, and presenting them to the Lord.

Bear we likewise in mind, that he who was thus offered in the temple, afterward offered, and still continues to present himself, to appear in the presence of God, for us. He it is, whose precious blood, whose infinite merits, whose prevailing satisfaction, the church in her prayers presenteth daily to God; and through whom alone, ourselves and all our oblations are accepted in the heavenly places. Nay, at that hallowed hour, when the eucharist is consecrated, Christ is again, figuratively and sacramentally, presented in the temple on earth. For his sake, the Father is then well pleased with us: he hears our prayers, forgives our sins, heals our infirmities, and graciously accepts our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Think not, O man, who slightest and disparagest that holy ordinance, that thou shouldst have received any pleasure, hadst thou stood by the Blessed Virgin, when she presented her Son at Jerusalem.

Jesus, not sprung from the tribe of Levi, but from that of Judah, was redeemed, at the same price with others, from attendance on the Mosaic ritual. He came to put a period to that dispensation; to establish the religion of the gospel; to be invested with an everlasting priesthood, after the order of Melchisedek; to be, himself, the priest and the sacrifice, the temple and the altar.

The Christian, once presented to God in baptism, cannot

obtain redemption from that service. He ought not ever to desire it. Such service is the only perfect freedom; a freedom from the tyranny of turbulent passions, and imperious desires, from the bondage of sin, of death, and of hell. Happy the servants of the best of masters, did they but know their own happiness; did they not grow weary of being well, and change, only to repent of their folly in having done so!

The offering made by Mary was the offering of the poor, of those who were not of ability to bring a more costly sacrifice; "according to that which is said in the law of the Lord; If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons."\*

Our Lord thought proper to appear, while on earth, in the character of a poor man, that he might advance the poor to the riches of his kingdom; and, in the mean time, render their condition here supportable, at least, if not pleasant, when they reflected that their Saviour was once as poor as they. At his birth he was poor, destitute of common conveniences. In his life—poor; "foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head." At his death poor; sold by the traitor for a paltry sum, stripped, crucified, and then buried at the expense of others. Let not him, therefore, who is of low degree, be troubled and cast down; but let him rather rejoice, because in his poor estate God hath had respect unto him. Let him take comfort in that he is made like to his Saviour, and endeavour daily to become more and more like him, by bearing his lot with patience, contentment, and resignation.

The sacrifices offered in old time for atonement and redemption tended to point out to the world this great and concerning truth, that offenders should be saved from death, and that God would one day accept a person in their stead, who should suffer what they deserved, and bestow upon them what they did not deserve. As the person thus destined to take away the sins of men was to be an innocent person, the most innocent creatures were generally chosen to represent him; among beasts the lamb, among birds the dove—a bird not armed with beak or talons, and having no design or desire to injure its fellows; noted for purity and

\* Lev. xii. 8.

fidelity, for meekness and mourning; sociable and friendly, and delighting to be about the dwellings of men. Such, after the example set us by our Master, ought we in temper and disposition to be, and then to offer up "ourselves, our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, through him, to God, which is our reasonable service."

Among these in Jerusalem who expected the appearance of a Redeemer about the time when he did appear, was a man named Simeon: stricken in years, and feeble in body, he possessed a mind and a faith vigorous and active. Not like the pharisees of that day, studious only to be thought "a just and devout man," he really was such; full of religion and the love of God, of an exact justice and sincere charity toward his neighbour; looking forward, while he lived upon earth, to the life of heaven, and desiring nothing more than that, before he died, he might see him whom the Jews and all the world did look for, the promised Messiah, the consolation of afflicted Israel. A devout Jew, who understood the scriptures of the Old Testament, waited for the first advent of Messiah in the weakness of mortal flesh: the devout Christian now waits for his second advent in the majesty of immortal glory.

Such being the character of Simeon, it had pleased God to reward his extraordinary faith and piety with a gracious promise, that the wish of his heart should be granted; "that he should not die, till he had seen the Lord's Christ." No good is it to live in the fear of God, in the expectation of his Son, and under the guidance of his Spirit.

The hour was now come, that Jesus should be brought to the temple, whither Simeon resorted, not out of curiosity, custom, interest, or hypocrisy, motives which too often lead men thither, but by the immediate direction of superior influence;—"he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law," and the priest, as was usual, embraced the presented child, and blessed him; then the good old man, transported and overcome at the so much desired sight, could no longer contain himself; but taking the holy infant in his arms, he poured forth with that voice, which was soon to be heard no more, the most melodious strains of gratitude and praise, bidding farewell to the world in the words of that hymn, which we are taught by our

church to recite, on the evening of each day, and which to the good man, at the close of life, will be sweet indeed—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." God had performed his promise, had shown him the Messiah, had filled his heart with joy, and made his old age honourable. Simeon had now gazed upon the Sun, and thenceforth became blind to the beauties of this lower world. Earth had no charms for him. He desired to depart. Thus will it be with the just and devout Christian, whose heart is set upon the Lord's Christ, and the consolation of Israel: who is led by the Spirit into the temple, there to find, to behold, and to embrace him, by faith, in his holy ordinances. If any dispute the truth of what is said, and be disposed to ask Nathanael's question, "Can any good thing come out of Galilee?"—the answer must be made in the words of Philip—**COME, AND SEE.**

Joseph and Mary, whose understandings, we may suppose, were gradually opened to the wonders about to be unfolded and accomplished, "marvelled at those things which were spoken" by Simeon, who "blessed them, and," in the ardour of the prophetic spirit, "said unto Mary, Behold this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed; yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." I recite these words last, that the sense may appear clearer; as, in the place where they stand, they are evidently parenthetical.

This is a short description of what passed at the time, and has been passing in the world ever since. It is not, as many seem to imagine, a matter of indifference, when Christ is preached, whether he be received, or rejected. It is necessarily productive of great effects; the fall of some, to whom he becomes a stone of stumbling and offence; the rising of others, who find in him a fortress and rock of salvation. Every one therefore should most diligently, from time to time, examine the state of his own mind, respecting the doctrines and the precepts of our Lord, whether he gives them a kind and hearty reception, or secretly slights, and contemns, and is ashamed of them. For the gospel is a touchstone, by



which the grand trial is made of the spirits of men: the thoughts of whose hearts are soon revealed by their words and actions; since, where it comes, they cannot long refrain from discovering their sentiments and inclinations, one way or other. Deep were to be the sorrows occasioned in the heart of her who bare the holy child, by the opposition raised against him, and the sufferings sustained by him.—“A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also.” The piercings of this sword must now be felt by those who love him, when he is again become “a sign” by so many “spoken against.” But as it was with the sufferings of his person, so will it be with those of his name—“Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning.”

While this curious and interesting scene was exhibited in the temple, “one Anna, a prophetess, a widow of about fourscore and four years, who served God with fastings and prayers night and day, coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”

On her story we may observe, that a life regularly and uniformly conducted according to the discipline of religion, and the ordinances of the church, attracts the notice of heaven, and is thought worthy of being recorded by the Spirit of truth: that the returns of prayer and the blessings of piety, though not bestowed, perhaps, at the seasons when we fondly expect them, yet at the last they will come, and crown all our wishes, with a sight of the Redeemer, and a participation of his joy: that we are always most likely to receive spiritual comforts in the temple. There it was, that this devout person had for so many years poured forth her heart unto God; and there it was, that it pleased him to reward her, by causing her to come in at the instant when Jesus was to be seen there. In holy places the Holy One doth chiefly manifest himself; he goeth in the sanctuary, and blessing goeth with him. The man who absents himself from the house of God, may miss the very sermon that would have brought him to consideration, to repentance, to faith, to pardon, and to peace; he may miss an opportunity of finding his Saviour, which may not be offered to him again.

To conclude—We are taught, by this example of Anna, what returns we should make to heaven for the knowledge of salvation communicated to us. We should glorify God,

and edify our neighbour. For she first “gave thanks unto the Lord;” and then “spake of Christ to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Some such there are at all times; and they should converse together, to improve and to comfort one another: hoping, at the end of their days, to behold the Lord’s Christ, the consolation of Israel, the light and the glory of the church universal, in the true temple, in the heavenly Jerusalem; where, let us beseech God, that “as his blessed Son was presented in the earthly temple, in the substance of our flesh, so we all may be presented unto him, with pure and clean hearts, by the same Jesus Christ, our Lord;” to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all blessing, and honour, might, majesty, and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

## DISCOURSE XLIV.

### THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING.

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.—*  
Mark xvi. 15, 16.

IT has been matter of wonder and offence to many, that in the great concern of man’s salvation, so much stress should be laid upon *faith*.—“He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.” Innumerable are the passages in different parts of the scriptures, which evidently speak the same thing. They are well known, and need not be now cited. The point is one of great importance, and I shall endeavour to clear it to your apprehensions by—

I. Removing out of the way those objections which have been made, and perhaps have already arisen in your own minds; and then—

II. Stating the grounds and reasons on which this divine determination is founded.

I. Of the objections, some respect the persons who are to believe, and others the doctrines to be believed.

Thousands and ten thousands, it may be said, never heard of Christ, or his gospel. It is true; and to them most certainly the determination does not extend. It can extend to such alone as have the gospel preached to them.—“Go ye, and preach the gospel; he that believeth”—that is, believeth the gospel so preached to him—“shall be saved,” &c.

But what, then, shall be the lot of all those who lived and died strangers to Christianity? They are in the hands of a gracious God, who may bestow on them the mercies of a redemption, of which they never heard. Without the death of Christ no flesh could have been saved. But who can say, to how many, and in what different ways, the merits of that death may be applied? For his sake, the sins may be pardoned of all those, who in honesty and uprightness did their best, according to the knowledge vouchsafed them, during the dispensation under which they lived. He who holds up his hand at the bar of eternal judgment, will not be there tried by a law which he never knew. The apostle to the Romans is express, that the Jews, who have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law; and the Gentiles, who were without *that* law, shall be judged by the rule they had derived, in part, by tradition from their ancestors, and improved and enlarged by their own reasonings and disquisitions. But then, as the same apostle argues at large, every man, whether Jew or Gentile, who is tried by a law of *works*, will, in strictness of speaking, be cast; because it will be proved upon him, that he has broken it. All the world are become guilty before God, and must place their hope in the mercies of that redemption which is by Christ Jesus.

The same limitation must of course take place in the case of infants, idiots, persons insane, and any way so defective in understanding, as to be incapable of learning and believing aright. He who made us, knoweth whereof we are made; he knoweth what is in man—in every man; and will not exact the tale of bricks, where he hath not thought proper to furnish straw.

We may conclude, in like manner, concerning what is called *invincible ignorance*, or ignorance so circumstanced

as to admit of no remedy.—“How can they hear without a preacher?” Where nothing is taught, nothing can be learned.

But let a man be very cautious how he attempts to shelter himself under this plea. At the great day, it will be inquired very minutely, not only what we *did* know, but also what we *might* have known, had we so pleased; had we been in earnest, and taken due pains. In the whole compass of speculation, there is not a more awful and alarming thought than this. The sinner may say, I did not know; but it will be returned—Why did you not? Had you no opportunities, which you neglected; no books, no persons, to whom you might apply? Did you ask, did you search, as you would have done, if likely to lose your health, or your estate? Or did you account it a matter not worthy your inquiry; and so, in a careless manner, dismiss it to take its chance? How have you been employed? How have you passed your time? A very small proportion of the hours spent in one single amusement would have brought you acquainted with all that it behoved you to know and believe, for your soul's health. I mention this, to show, that however it may fare with heathens, and others, in a state really destitute of information, and where it was impossible to be obtained, *we* shall in vain attempt to excuse our unbelief, or ill practices, by our ignorance. Nothing, at the day of trial, will more shock and confound us, than when the times and the places shall be pointed out, in which we were called to know and to do better, but refused to obey the call. Let none, therefore, deceive themselves in this very weighty particular.

Respecting the doctrines to be believed, it is objected, that they are *mysterious*; they relate to persons and things in another world, which are therefore *hidden* from us; we can neither see them, nor hear them: none of the senses, with which we are at present endowed, can reach or perceive them. What, then, is to be done? Why, certainly, we must believe the account which God, by his prophets and apostles, has been pleased to give us; and we must form our notions of them, as well as we can, by comparison with those things which are the objects of our senses. Our state, with regard to God and the glories of his heavenly kingdom, is exactly like the state of a blind man, with regard to the sun, and the light thereof. He cannot see the



sun, or the light that issues from it; yet, he would be unreasonable, should he refuse to believe what his friends, who do see it, tell him concerning it; though, after all, they can give him but a very poor, imperfect idea of it. If it pleased God to open his eyes, and bestow on him the blessing of sight, he would know more of the matter in one single moment, than description, study, and meditation, could have taught him in a hundred years, or a thousand years, or ten thousand years. Such is our case. We cannot see God; we cannot see the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; we cannot see how they are three, and how they are one. But shall we therefore, in opposition to the authority and word of God himself, deny that they are so? We may reason and dispute upon the subject for ages; but in that instant, when we are admitted to his presence, and “see him as he is,” every doubt and difficulty will vanish at once; and we shall know—how little we *did* know, or possibly *could* know, before. Tell a blind man, your sight can travel over the space of one hundred millions of miles, as soon as it can move the distance of ten yards—how full of absurdity, contradiction, and impossibility, must this assertion appear to him, who can conceive of motion only in slow succession! Yet it is a certain truth: for let a person be led forth, in a clear night, with his eyes closed; on opening them, he will see the remotest star in the firmament, that can be seen at all, as soon as he will see a candle, at the distance only of a few yards from him.

This instance may serve to show, how very ill qualified we are to dispute with our Maker, concerning his own nature and existence, and the things of another and invisible world. Of the truth of revelation we have the most decisive evidence, that of the senses, in the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles, of which the eyes and ears of men were sufficient judges. Knowing, therefore, assuredly, that God hath spoken, and giving diligent attention to that which he hath spoken, it is our part, at present, to believe what we shall one day be permitted to see.

Another objection to the doctrines of which we are treating is, that learned men have been engaged in controversies about them for many hundred years, and are not yet agreed: what, therefore, must the unlearned do?

To this it may be answered, in the first place, that learned

men have carried on controversies about every thing. Some have thought there is no revelation at all; some that there is no Providence; some that there is no God; and while some have denied that there is any world but this, in which we live, others have maintained that this world itself is a dream and a fancy, existing only in our own minds, and that in reality there is no such thing. So that if we wait till all learned men shall agree, we shall believe nothing, know nothing, and do nothing.

2. All the disputes concerning the Trinity, have been owing to one single circumstance, namely, the vain, idle, and presumptuous curiosity of man, who, instead of believing that which God hath revealed, will ever be prying into that which God hath not revealed. That there is in the Deity a distinction, and an union; that God is three, in some respect; and one, in some other respect; this is what we are required to believe: and who can prove that it is not so? or why should any man dispute it? But we are not content, unless we know, precisely, the manner *how* the three persons are one God; how the Son is generated, and the Holy Ghost proceeds. Hence all our misfortunes; hence the subject has been overwhelmed and confounded by an inundation of scholastic and metaphysical controversy, which it requires no small degree of penetration and sagacity, as well as of learning, to understand; if, indeed, some of it can be understood at all. If you ask, what the unlearned are to do, with regard to this dispute!—I answer, they are happy in their ignorance, in which I would wish them ever to continue. Two learned physicians may differ in opinion, as to the *manner* in which the human body is nourished by its food; they may perplex each other with hard words; they may argue themselves out of temper, and lose their appetite; while an unlearned, plain, honest countryman eats his meal in quietness, gives God thanks for it, goes forth in the strength of it to his labour, and in the evening receives his reward.

In the concerns of this world, as well as of another, the most interesting truths are always the plainest; they are matters of fact, on which we may depend, without being solicitous to know exactly how they are brought about. Who can tell by what means a small seed, buried in the earth, and there becoming, to all appearance, dead and putrid, shoots forth into a blade, and an ear, producing thirty,

forty, or sixty seeds, of its own kind? A man, calling himself a philosopher, might defy the husbandman to show, how this could possibly be. The husbandman's common sense would direct him to answer, that it was not his concern to show *how* it could be; that he knew it certainly would be, and therefore should continue to sow; which should he, upon the strength of the philosopher's arguments, neglect to do, the world must be starved.

Objections thus removed, let us now—

II. Consider the grounds and reasons on which is founded the divine determination in the text, namely, that when the gospel is preached, it is necessary, in order to a man's salvation, that he should believe it.

And this point will require but little to be said upon it. For to what purpose is the gospel preached, unless that it should be believed? When God, with so stupendous a preparation of prophecies and miracles, has published his word, can it be a matter of indifference, whether we believe it or not? Can any man in his senses possibly think it such? Surely not: the Lord of heaven and earth is not, with impunity, to be insulted and trifled with in this manner. “He that believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son,” as the beloved disciple hath justly observed, “makes God a liar.” If man give the lie to man, it is judged an offence to be expiated only by the blood of the offender. Can man, then, give the lie to his Maker, and be blameless?

The divine word is not an insignificant word; it is set, like its Author, for the falling or rising of many. It is not without its effect in every one to whom it is preached. If we will not suffer it to avail to our salvation, it will avail to our condemnation.—“The word that I speak,” says our Lord, “that shall judge him at the last day.”

What is it that distinguishes a Christian from a Jew, a Turk, or a heathen? It is his faith, his knowledge of Christ and the gospel; his belief in all that has been revealed. When he no longer retains that belief, he ceases to be a Christian; he ceases to have any share or interest in Christ; he becomes an apostate from his religion.

A strange doctrine has of late years been diffused among us, that *sincerity* is every thing; that if a man be but *sincere*, it matters not what he believes, or what he does. If this principle be carried to its full extent, it must take away all

distinction between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; it sets upon a level those who crucified Christ, and those who accepted him as their lord and master; those who persecuted the Christians, and the Christians who were persecuted. Many who assisted at the crucifixion of Christ, might really imagine that he was a deceiver, and that they did right in so punishing him. But *was* he therefore a deceiver, or *did* they do right? St. Paul tells us, that, in his unconverted state, he "*verily thought* he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" and, accordingly, he "was exceedingly mad against the disciples," and would have extirpated that name from the earth, had it been in his power. But was he justified in endeavouring to do this, because he had taken up a false persuasion? Undoubtedly not. He confesses himself to have been, on this account, the greatest of sinners, and that he obtained mercy only through the undeserved grace and goodness of God. The case is this—Before a man can lay any claim to *sincerity*, in the full and proper sense of the word, he must be able to show, when God, to whom all things are known, and all hearts are open, shall call upon him, that he has not, through indolence, neglected to search after the truth, nor, through passion, prejudice, or interest, refused to receive it. This will go to the bottom of the dispute, and lay open the deception.

It will enable us likewise to answer another plea sometimes urged in favour of infidelity, namely, that there can be no merit, or demerit, in believing, or disbelieving; that a man cannot believe as he pleases, but only as the evidence appears to him.

How argues the apostle upon this topic?—"What, if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the word of God of none effect? God forbid! Let God be true"—God will be true—"though every man be a liar." If God have given, as he certainly has given, good and sufficient evidence, it is at any man's peril that he rejects it; and he rejects it, not for insufficiency in the evidence, but from some hidden corruption in his heart, which ought to have been first cast out, before he sat down to judge.

In the presence of a multitude of spectators, Christ raised Lazarus from the dead. On seeing the miracle, many believed on him, and became his disciples. Why did not all do so, for all saw the miracle? There could be no decep-



tion: none was thought of, or suspected: all allowed that a person dead was, by a word spoken, recalled to life. Yet there were those, who, instead of joining themselves to Christ, and acknowledging their Messiah, consulted that they might put Lazarus to death. It does not always happen, that we can know what passes in the minds of men on such occasions. But, in the present instance, we are admitted behind the scenes, and full information is communicated. "Then gathered the chief priests and pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." Want of evidence is not the complaint.—"This man doth many miracles;" the point is conceded; but politics interfered; they apprehended they should suffer, if they confessed Christ, from the Roman government, to which they were then subject. They, therefore, stifled their convictions, forced their consciences, and, from that day forth, to make all sure, took "counsel to put Jesus to death." They carried their counsel into execution; and the consequence was, that what before they vainly feared, now actually happened—"the Romans did come, and did take away both their place and nation." This may serve to convince you, how large a share the *will* has in the production of faith; and that no evidence in the world will cause a man to believe that, which, for private reasons, he does not *choose* to believe.

I shall conclude, with mentioning the chief ground on which the necessity of faith is so much pressed in scripture; namely, because it comprehends in it the great motives of action; it is the principle of life.—"The just shall live by faith," says the apostle, at the conclusion of the 10th chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; and if, at your leisure, you will peruse the 11th chapter, you will there find a history of the great and wonderful works, wrought by holy men in old time, from Abel downwards, through the power of this principle. In us, to whom more has been revealed than was revealed to them, it should not be less operative and effectual, than it was in them. We shall constantly perceive the vigour of our practice to be proportionable to the steadfastness and liveliness of our faith; what revives one, will always quicken the other. From every doctrine in the creed

issues a commandment; and the doctrine stirs us up to keep the commandment.

When, by reciting the creed, we declare our belief in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, with all that each has done for us; we should love the Father, for his tender love; adore the Almighty, for his infinite power; and commit our souls to him, in well doing, as to a faithful Creator.

From Jesus we should seek salvation; from Christ, the anointed, as a Prophet, instruction; as a Priest, atonement; as a King, protection; as the only-begotten Son, the adoption of children. As our Lord, we should serve him, for his conception, in faith; for his nativity, in humility; for his sufferings, in patience; for his cross, in crucifying sin; for his death, in mortifying the flesh; for his burial, in burying the old man, with his evil desires; for his descent, in meditation on the other world; for his resurrection, in newness of life; for his ascension and enthronization, in setting our affections on things above, on the pleasures at God's right hand; for his return, in awe of his second coming; for his judgment, in judging ourselves, before we come to be judged by him.

From the Spirit we should seek the breath of saving grace; that so, in the church, we may partake of a high and heavenly calling; in the holy church, of sanctification; in the Catholic church, of communion with our brethren, in prayers and sacraments; and all this, to a firm persuasion of the remission of our sins, as well as a confident hope of resurrection and translation to life eternal. Thus is the creed at once a profession of faith, a manual of devotions, and a directory of practice—"The just shall live by his faith."

That we may evermore preserve this faith, pure and undefiled, and that, "by works, faith may be made perfect," God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ.

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## DISCOURSE XLV.

JOSHUA'S CHOICE.

*Choose ye this day whom ye will serve—but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*—Josh. xxiv. 15.

A NOBLE resolution! formed by a very eminent person, on a very solemn occasion. That person was Joshua, the leader of the hosts of Israel, by whose arm it pleased God to execute upon sinful nations the punishments due to their crimes, and to place his chosen people in the land promised to their fathers. The General was now “old and stricken in age,” and the hour of death drew near. Before it came, he wished to deliver his final sentiments to the people under his command. They were assembled for that purpose; “he called for all Israel, for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God,” as you do this day. They were not backward, we may be sure, in coming. Last words are always listened to with attention, as likely to be words of truth, and words of importance. Dying men do not usually utter falsehoods, or speak of trifles. But the last words of a veteran officer, under whom they had fought and conquered, of a wise and heaven-directed ruler, by whom they had been settled, according to their tribes, in pleasant and peaceable habitations, must above all others deserve to be heard, and remembered for ever. He reminded them of all the mercies which God from time to time had shown to the nation, of the wonders that had been wrought, and the very minute and punctual manner in which the divine promises had been fulfilled. He urged from hence the return which they ought to make, and the bitter consequences which they might expect to follow their ingratitude and apostacy: since God would not be less exact in the infliction of his threats, than he had been in the performance of his promises. The means by which these likewise would be accomplished, were pointed out. Notwithstanding their

establishment in Canaan, enemies of that establishment still subsisted, and were left for this very end, in case of their rebellion, "to be scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes, till they perished from off the good land, which the Lord their God had given them." He then draws all his instructions and admonitions to a point, and thus leaves his testimony recorded against them, on the behalf of himself and his family—"If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose ye this day whom ye will serve—but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Such are the particulars of the case alluded to in the words of the text. The general instruction they contain may be drawn forth, for our own use, by considering, *why* we are to serve, *whom* we are to serve, and *how* we are to serve.

I. If we attend to the writings of some, and the manners of more, in the present age, we shall be led to think, that we are not to serve either God or man; that we have nothing to do with church or state; that the world is a forest, into which we are turned loose, like so many wild asses colts, to snuff up the wind, and run till we drop; in a word, that we are *born free and independent*. Alas, poor creatures! *Free and independent*, indeed! Why, we should not live six hours to an end, after our birth, in such a state. From the first moment in which we see light, we depend, for preservation and support, on the good offices of those around us; they depend on others, and all on God. One planteth, and another watereth; but who else can give the increase? Who is it else that can direct the operations of the powers of nature, concerned in bringing food out of the earth; that can open the bottles of heaven, to pour down a kindly rain; or can stay them, when they threaten to overwhelm and destroy all the hopes of a promised harvest? Let others talk of matter and motion, of chance, or necessity;—"We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

To behold the fair frame of the world, with the several parts so constructed as they are for use and beauty, and all the various movements carried on in it, and to suppose it had no Maker, must surely argue a great defect of understanding.—"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;" and he is represented as having said it only *in his heart*, not daring to utter with his mouth so preposterous a sentiment. Lives there a man, who can look at a house, or even a plough,



and imagine, for a moment, that it made itself? How much less, then, the heavens and the earth, and the works that are therein? Away with the idle fancy, the sick man's dream; it would be criminal to waste any more time in the consideration of it!

But shall we then suppose, that he who created the world has withdrawn himself from the care of it; that he regards not the 'creatures which he has made, nor desires to be regarded by them? The supposition, is unnatural and absurd. It was made by one sect of the heathen only, in their lowest and darkest state, and that sect long abhorred by the rest for its folly and impiety. When riches flowed in from the east, and luxury had corrupted the minds, and unstrung the nerves of the old Romans, these tenets became fashionable; a circumstance which was thought, by wise men, to prognosticate and to hasten the downfall of the empire. It is matter of melancholy reflection to observe, that the very same tenets have been of late revived and recommended in Great Britain, under the name and notion of *philosophy*, and are, if fame says true, daily gaining ground among the wealthy and the great, from whom they will soon descend to the middle and lower ranks, till the religious principle shall perish from among us. May heaven avert the omen, and save the land! The offence of Englishmen far exceeds that of the Romans, and is very greatly aggravated by this consideration: they who were atheists formerly, were atheists in opposition to a false religion; they who are atheists now, are such in opposition to the true. The Son of God is come, and has led us into all truth. The scriptures have dispelled (and it ought to have been *for ever*) such gloomy and comfortless principles. They give us full assurance, that the providence of God extendeth itself over all things, and all persons; that though his throne be indeed far removed from us, though it be exalted as the sun, yet that, like the sun, "Jehovah looketh from heaven, he beholdeth all the sons of men; from the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth;" that he doth what the sun cannot do—"He fashioneth their hearts alike, and considereth all their works;" that "the eyes of all wait on him, and he giveth them their food in due season."

Man being thus dependent, it is but reasonable that he

should acknowledge such dependence, and that he should *serve*. We are to inquire,—

11dly. *Whom* he should serve. For, as the apostle has remarked, “there are gods many, and lords many,” who, in different ages, have claimed and obtained the homage of mankind. The point in dispute, between Joshua and his people, was not, whether they should serve *at all*, but *whom* they should serve; whether the gods of the nations around them, or Jehovah, the God of Israel.

It may seem difficult to account for, and even to conceive, that strange propensity, which appears in the early ages of the world, to the worship of idols, and of which nothing less than a seventy years’ captivity in Babylon could finally cure the Israelites themselves. Before that event, notwithstanding all the miracles of power and goodness, which God had wrought for them, we read continually of their forsaking *him*, and going over to the worship of *strange gods*. Who these *strange gods* were, or what charms they possessed, thus to bewitch, and seduce the minds of persons better taught and instructed, deserves consideration.

Now, it appears, by the testimony of all history, sacred and profane, that the oldest and first idolaters worshipped the creature instead of the Creator, the powers of nature instead of the God of nature. Receiving life, health, food, and many other blessings, by means of the sun, the light, and the air, they forgot God who made those elements, and “deemed *them* to be the gods that governed the world,” supposing them to be endued with understanding and wisdom, as well as power and might.

This kind of idolatry perished long ago, with the nations among whom it was practised. But let us not imagine we ourselves are therefore free from the crime; since every man is guilty of it, who offers to the *world*, or any thing *in* the world, the service which is due to God only.

The scripture declares concerning covetousness, that it is *idolatry*; and concerning unbelievers and bad men in general, that they serve the god of this world. He, therefore, who devotes his time and his pains, his words and his actions, his heart and his affections, to the pursuit of power, wealth, or pleasure, in effect revives the old idolatry, and virtually sacrifices to the gods of the nations. He serves the

creature rather than the Creator. And of the service which he is often led to perform, it cannot be said, as it is truly said of another and better service, that it is "perfect freedom." They who, in veneration of Baal, cut themselves with knives and lancets, or out of respect to Moloch, made their children to pass through the fire, would not suffer, perhaps, by the comparison. Health and peace, honour and conscience, present happiness and future expectancies, are costly oblations, daily and hourly offered at the shrine of these sub-lunary deities.

The *world*, in short, under one form or other, has ever been the idol set up against God by the adversary of mankind, like the image erected by the monarch of Babylon, in the plain of Dura, before which, "the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were to fall down and worship." The world, with its fashions and its follies, its principles and its practices, has been proposed in form to Englishmen, as the proper object of their attention and devotion. A late celebrated nobleman has avowed as much with respect to himself, and by his writings said in effect to it, "Save me, for thou art my god!" He has tendered his assistance to act as priest upon the occasion, and conduct the ceremonial. At the close of life, however, his god, he found, was about to forsake him, and therefore, was forsaken by him.—You shall hear some of his last sentiments and expressions, which have not been hitherto (so far as I know) duly noticed, and applied to their proper use, that of furnishing an antidote (and they do furnish a very powerful one) to the noxious positions contained in his volumes. They are well worthy your strictest attention. "I have run (says this man of the world) the silly rounds of business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and, consequently, know their futility, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is in truth very low: whereas, those that have not experienced, always over-rate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with their glare. But I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pullies, and dirty ropes, which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles, which illuminate the whole decoration, to the asto-

nishment and admiration of an ignorant audience. When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry and bustle, and pleasure of the world, had any reality; but I look upon all that has passed, as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions; and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose, for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot help it. I bear it—because I must bear it, whether I will or no—I think of nothing but killing time the best I can, now that he is become mine enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey.”

When a Christian priest speaks slightly of the world, he is supposed to do it in the way of his profession, and to decry, through envy, the pleasures he is forbidden to taste. But here, I think, you have the testimony of a witness every way competent. No man ever knew the world better, or enjoyed more of its favours, than this nobleman. Yet you see in how poor, abject, and wretched a condition, at the time when he most wanted help and comfort, the world left him, and he left the world. The sentences above cited from him compose, in my humble opinion, the most striking and affecting sermon upon the subject, ever yet preached to mankind. My younger friends, lay them up in your minds, and write them on the tables of your hearts; take them into life with you: they will prove an excellent preservative against temptation. When you have duly considered them, and the character of him by whom they were uttered, you shall compare them, if you please, with the words of another person, who took his leave of the world in a very different manner—“I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day.” Say, shall your lot be with the Christian, or the man of the world; with the apostle, or the libertine? You will not hesitate a moment, but, in reply to those who may attempt to seduce you into the paths of vice and error, honestly and boldly



exclaim, every one of you, with Joshua, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve—but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

III. How we are to serve him, is the last point to be settled.

A concise way of coming at this, will be, to reflect upon the qualifications you require in a good servant, and to see that they be found in yourselves, considered as the servants of God.

These qualifications may all be reduced to two—that he be careful to know the will of his master, and diligent to do it. Both are most happily expressed and exemplified in the question asked by St. Paul, immediately upon his conversion.—"Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" Never was there more interesting matter contained in so few plain and simple words. They were the first effect of the divine grace inspired into his heart. All the virtues and excellencies of his after life were comprehended in the disposition implied by them, as a plant is in its seed. They included the acorn, from whence arose that oak, which overshadowed and refreshed the world.

Upon a general view of them, they evidently intimate to us a renunciation of all our former proceedings during the time when we followed the motions of our own wills; a firm resolution of obeying the will of God for the residue of our days; and a hearty desire of attaining to the knowledge of it for that purpose, and for that purpose only.

But it is worth while to be a little more particular.

In our inquiries after the will of God, we are often apt to be partial. We inquire only after such parts of it as may happen to coincide with our circumstances, our situation, our tempers, our constitutions, our interests. There are other parts, perhaps, which might cross and thwart the turn of our minds, or our views in life; take away some of our comforts, or deprive us even of some conveniences. With these parts we care not to form any acquaintance, lest conscience should insist on our obedience, or trouble and torment us for our disobedience. There are not unfrequently, therefore, certain points in reserve, of so tender and delicate a nature, that we suffer them not to be approached by others, nor, indeed, dare to approach them ourselves. But there are no reserves in St. Paul's question—"Lord, *what* wouldest thou have me

to do?" Whatever it may be, whatever the difficulties, whatever the consequences—"none of those things move me"—I am ready, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

It is a maxim laid down by our blessed Saviour, that "no man can serve *two* masters." A more indisputable maxim cannot be laid down; because as the wills of the two masters may, and probably will be different, or even contrary, their commands will be so too; and, therefore, cannot be obeyed by the same person, who must soon be obliged to give up one, and adhere to the other. Plain as this truth appears to be, it is late in life before we are convinced of it; before we cease to hope, that, by a little management, we can contrive to please God and the world. Different was the opinion of Joshua. He did not suppose it possible, at the same time to serve Jehovah and the gods of the nations. "Choose ye *whom* ye will serve—I will serve Jehovah." Agreeably to which, St. Paul asks, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" Not—what will my own inclinations, what will my friends, what will my kinsfolk, what will the world—but, "what wilt *thou* my Saviour, and my God, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things (needful) shall be added unto you." Serve God; and the world, in the course of God's providence, will be made to serve you; and that, sometimes, in a manner very surprising, and unlooked for.

There is yet a different error in the conduct of men. It is when they employ themselves to discover the obligations and the failings of *others*, entirely forgetful of their own. They can tell you the duties of the king and of his ministers, and of the admirals, generals, and governors employed by them; of both houses of parliament; of the bishops and the clergy; and of all their neighbours, great and small. They can tell the duties of these, respectively; they can point out the particulars in which such duties are neglected; and inform you how the neglects may still be remedied. Yet when God shall call these censors and judges of their brethren to account for their *own* duties, they will perceive, perhaps for the first time, to their utter amazement and confusion, that they have never once thought of performing *them*. To prevent so ridiculous and fatal a blunder, let it be observed, that St. Paul did not ask, what God would have

*others* to do ; but, “ Lord (says he), what wouldest thou have *me* to do ? ” Show me my own duty, and it sufficeth. Had the men, of whom we have been speaking, preferred this petition to God, he would have taught them, in the first place, to bestow much of their time and thoughts upon their own concerns, and little upon those of others, unless where commanded by him so to do, as a part of their own duty.

The last mistake that shall be mentioned, relative to our inquiries after the will of God, is, when we make those inquiries, as matter of speculation only, as an amusement of the mind. For to this purpose are the scriptures often applied ; and it is possible to make them the subjects of our writings and conversations, without any design or desire of reducing them to practice. Whereas there is no article of faith, which does not involve in it a corresponding duty. For, surely, to every one who repeats the Creed, may God justly be considered as saying—“ If I be a God, where is my worship ? If I be a Father, where is my obedience ? If I be Almighty, where is my trust ? If I be a Creator, where is my service ? If I be a Redeemer, where is my love ? If I be a Judge, where is my fear ! ” In matters of religion, when there is something to be known, there is always something to be done. St. Paul, therefore, asked not—“ Lord, what wouldest thou have me to *know* ! ” but—“ Lord, what wouldest thou have me to *do* ? ”

In a word—This question, which was thus asked by St. Paul, at the beginning of his conversion, should be asked by us, to the end of our lives, in all circumstances, those more especially that may be new and difficult. When we thus turn our thoughts to God, and sincerely supplicate for the divine direction, by his grace bringing to our minds the instructions in the scriptures adapted to our case, or by some other means, as he shall see proper, we shall never fail to receive it. Convinced by unanswerable reasons *why* we should *serve*, and having formed a resolution to serve God, and him only, we shall never be at a loss to know, *how* we should serve him.

But we cannot follow a safer guide, than when we follow our own church, as she follows the scriptures ; for while she teaches us how to serve God acceptably in public with our lips, she teaches us how to serve him acceptably in private

with our lives. The prayers, whereby, at church, we entreat for grace to perform all the various duties of Christianity, afford the best heads of self-examination at home, to discover whether we have used that grace to the purposes for which it was given; whether our improvements keep pace with our devotions. In the services of the church of England, we find the faith once delivered to the saints, and the morality once practised by them. Truth and holiness are the characteristics of her ritual. Avoiding the follies and absurdities of enthusiasm, which is religion run mad; and superstition, which is religion frightened out of its senses; she keeps the even tenor of her way, in a firm, manly, rational, cheerful piety toward God, and an unbounded charity toward man. Congenial to the spirit of the British monarchy, she has shared of old in its fall, and its restoration.—“They have been lovely and pleasant in their lives”—May they continue to be so, to the years of many generations! But, from the aspect which the times wear toward both, it is easy to foretell, that whenever the day fatal to one of them shall come—if come it must—“in their deaths they will not be divided.”

## DISCOURSE XLVI.

### FEMALE CHARACTER.

*He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children.—Psalm lxxviii. 5, 6.*

AT a time when the world resounds with the noise of war, and the bustle of politics, an interval of separation from its concerns becomes more than usually agreeable. We seek and take refuge in the sanctuary with double ardour and



delight. Sunday arises upon us in new beauty, and appears with fresh charms. We bless God that we have such a day to keep, and a church to which we may repair, where the weary mind, as well as the weary body, may cease a while from its labours, and be refreshed in the multitude of peace. The solemnity of the place, the decency and propriety of the services, with the sight of so many cheerful countenances attending in composure and silence to the word of God, affect the beholder with unutterable pleasure; and, whatever his sentiments might have been at his first entrance, conform him by degrees to the same temper and behaviour.

This is more especially the case in an assembly met, as at present, upon the promotion of a noble and generous design for the benefit of our fellow creatures and fellow Christians. Religion, as she descended from heaven in original purity, is the choicest gift of God to man; and charity, though the youngest, is the fairest daughter of religion. “Now abide faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity”—the greatest, as it is a virtue subsisting in the divine mind (where faith and hope can have no place), and from thence derived to man; the greatest, as it is the end and crown of the other two; the greatest, as it is immediately connected with happiness, since we cannot do any good to others, without doing more to ourselves, even in our present feelings; and the greatest, as charity will remain, when faith shall be lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment. Not that this virtue will or can then exert itself as it does now. As God himself in another world will be men’s portion, and therefore they can *want* nothing, charity will then act inwardly, by making us partake of that happiness which others enjoy, and outwardly, by expressing, in ways suitable to our state, how much we are delighted with their happiness. Where this regard is mutual, as in heaven it must ever be, each person will not only increase his own felicity, but prove the occasion of heightening that of others; so that the principle itself will be eternally strengthening, and the effect which it produces be eternally improving.

In the present life, charity principally shows itself in attempts toward removing the hindrances of happiness, or at most in supplying materials for it; and therefore those

attempts most deserve encouragement, which extend farthest; which take in both parts of the human composition, and provide, at the same time, for the bodies and the minds of those who are the objects of them; so that while the former appear clothed in the livery of charity, the latter may have put on knowledge as a vesture, and righteousness as a garment.

The following Discourse shall be confined to the particular subject of the institution now before us, by first offering some thoughts upon the importance of forming the *female* character by education, and then exhibiting a picture of that character, as it ought to appear, when formed; after which, few words will be required to induce you to support a charity designed for the purpose of forming it.

I. No pains or expense are spared in teaching *man* knowledge. Not so, in teaching it to woman. But why? Are women incapable of it? By no means. There have been instances to the contrary, in every age: there are many shining ones in the present. They are what they are by education. If ignorant, it is through want of instruction, not of capacity.

It may, perhaps, be said, that they are of that sex usually styled and allowed to be the *weaker* sex. So much the more necessity is there, then, for their being strengthened and fortified by sound precepts well inculcated, and good examples set before them.

But do not women, that are become learned, make themselves ridiculous? Perhaps they may sometimes, for want of being taught the most useful part of learning, which is *discretion*. But though some do this, others do it not. They know how to manage their learning, when they have got it; and possess it, as if they possessed it not.

Women, however, are not designed to govern the state, or to command armies; to plead in Westminster Hall, or to preach in the church; and therefore need not study the sciences leading to those several professions. But there are employments suited to them, and to which they ought to be suited; and no small degree of knowledge is required to suit them. The knowledge that is necessary for men, may not be necessary for them; but they are not, for that reason, to be left in ignorance.

A young woman, that is ignorant, will be idle, because

she knows not what to do ; if she is idle, she will soon be miserable, because, throughout the world, from the highest to the lowest, happiness consists in employment ; if she is miserable, she will seek to relieve her misery by wandering abroad, running after shows and diversions. When she is arrived thus far, she may soon go farther ; she may become vicious herself, and then most probably will spend the rest of her life, in making others so, that have the misfortune to fall in her way. And how many these may be, who can say ? The bad education of women doth generally even more mischief than that of men ; since the vices of men often proceed either from the ill education they received at first from their mothers, or else from the passions which other women inspire into them at a riper age.

Female influence always has been and always must be very great in the world ; and therefore it is in the power of a well educated woman, whatever be her station, to do much good in it.

How valuable to a family is a prudent and faithful *servant* of this sex, and of what vast importance to the temporal interests of a master or mistress has such an one proved ! — sometimes to interests of an higher nature. Curious to this purpose, is the story told in the fifth chapter of the second book of Kings. The Syrians had invaded the land of Israel, and, among other prisoners, had brought away captive *a little maid*, and she waited on the wife of Naaman, the king of Syria's general, a man of high renown, and in great favour at court, but afflicted with a terrible and loathsome disease, the leprosy, incurable by human means. This servant, who had been educated in the true religion, and therefore knew the power of the God of Israel, and the miracles wrought by the hands of his prophets, grieved at the unhappy condition of her new master, expressed her wishes to her mistress, that he would apply, for help, to Elisha. — “ Would God (said she) my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria ; for he would recover him of his leprosy.” The words were so remarkable, that presently “ one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid, that is of the land of Israel.” The consequence was, that the general took a journey to the prophet, and was not only cured of his leprosy, but became a convert to the true religion, and worshipped the God of Elisha. And how often have persons in the

highest stations been excited to good, or restrained from evil, at the instance, or by the example, of an inferior in the train of their own servants, who had been taught in early youth, what *they* perhaps had never learned, or, in the hour of passion, had forgotten !

The importance of female education will rise in our opinion, if we consider women as persons who may become *wives*, and *mistresses* of families. In this situation, they have duties to perform, which lie at the very foundation of human life ; the support or the ruin of families depends upon their conduct ; they have the direction of household affairs ; they, consequently, determine the greatest concerns of mankind, and form the good or evil manners of almost all the world. A judicious woman, that is diligent and religious, is the very soul of a house : she gives orders for the good things of this life, and for those too of eternity. Men themselves, who have all the authority in public, cannot yet, by their deliberations, establish any effectual good without the concurring assistance of women to carry them into execution. Besides their authority and their continual attendance in their houses, they have the advantage of being by nature careful, attentive to particulars, industrious, insinuating, and persuasive. And how can the men hope for any content in life, if their strictest friendship and alliance, which is that of marriage, be turned into disappointment and bitterness ?

But a matter of more weight is still behind. As *mothers*, women have, for some time, and that the most critical time too, the care of the education of their children of both sorts, who, in the next age, are to make up the great body of the world. And as the health and strength, or sickliness and weakness of our bodies, are very much owing to *their* methods of treating us when we were young ; so the soundness or folly of our minds are not less owing to those first tempers and ways of thinking, which we eagerly received from the love, tenderness, authority, and constant conversation of our mothers. As we call our first language our *mother* tongue, so we may as justly call our first tempers our *mother* tempers ; and perhaps it may be found more easy to forget the language, than to part entirely with those tempers, which we learnt in the nursery.

That mothers, where they themselves have been well



instructed, are more *capable* than men of teaching their children, will appear from these considerations:—First, from their circumstances and condition of life: they are more within doors; have more time to spare; are best acquainted with their children's tempers; and always have them in their eye. Secondly, they have an advantage from their own make and frame of mind; they are generally more apprehensive of danger, and of what may come hereafter, than men are. This makes them more concerned for their children's everlasting welfare, and solicitous to teach them what they know themselves. Then, they are of a milder disposition; can bear with their children's infirmities, and correct them with a tenderness which even recommends a necessary severity. By this means their children come to love them, and to be fond of their instruction, and to imitate their example. Besides all this, they are more patient of this kind of labour than men are. It is not the child's dulness, nor the necessity of often repeating the same things, that will weary or discourage the pious mother. And, which is not to be omitted, she has an opportunity of seeing whether her instructions are apprehended and followed; of destroying vices, while they are in the bud; as also, of encouraging every commendable word and action in its season.

In one word—The mothers have an opportunity, both by their instruction and example, of fixing such lasting impressions upon their children's minds, as, by the blessing of God upon their endeavours, neither the iniquity of the age, nor the enemy of mankind, shall ever be able to blot out.\*

Some very remarkable facts, confirming what has been said, deserve your utmost attention.

At this day, the children of Jews are always under the mother's care and instruction, if living, till they come to a certain age; during which time, they are taught to read the

\* “A proper and effectual education of the female sex is one of the very first steps to be taken for the effectual improvement and civilization of the whole empire. For children fall inevitably into the hands and under the care of women, in their infant state: therefore their first and strongest impressions will be good or bad, salutary or destructive, according to the morals, character, and conduct of those women, under whose early tuition they may fall.”—Dr. Brown's Sketch of a Plan of Legislation for the Russian Empire, given in the *Biographia Britannica*, vol. ii. 664, second edition.

law, and so well instructed in its worth, and aim, and meaning, that they are very hardly, if ever, brought over to Christianity, either by the temporal or spiritual advantages which attend it.

One of the deputies, at the synod of Dort, informed that assembly, that in his country there was scarce a person, how poor and mean soever his condition was, but could read, and give a tolerable account of his faith. This, he said, was owing chiefly to the great care that had been taken to instruct the *women*, who, when they came to be mothers, scarce ever failed to instruct their children.

St. Paul, addressing himself to his beloved Timothy, has these remarkable words—"That I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." You see, that the faith and piety, here commended and gloried in, were continued and propagated in the family by the women *chiefly*. That "unfeigned faith," and that zeal for the glory of God, which was found in Timothy, and which qualified him for a bishop, or overseer, in the church of God, was derived to *him* from his *mother* and *grandmother*, whose instruction and examples he followed; and so became an instrument of great good to the world.

Nor are examples wanting among ourselves of virtue and piety, the fear and the blessing of God, continued in families for many generations, by the religious care and concern of mothers, that have had a Christian education; who, however they may excuse themselves from some other labours, which attend the bringing up of their children, if they neglect *this*, are inexcusable; neither the tenderness of their constitution, nor the care of their families (much less the pleasures of the world), neither their quality on the one hand, nor their poverty on the other, will ever free them from the guilt, and infamy, and curse, which will attend those who shall suffer their children to grow up, without principles, and without morality.

To the foregoing considerations it may be added, that virtue is not more the business of men, than it is of women, who are the one half of the human race, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and designed for eternal life. They are to live for themselves; they have as great a

share in the rational nature as men have; they have as much reason to pretend to, and as much necessity to aspire after, the highest accomplishments of a Christian and solid virtue, as the gravest and wisest among Christian philosophers. When we spoil them by a wrong education, we spoil that part of the world which would otherwise, perhaps, furnish most instances of an eminent and exalted goodness; since they are naturally possessed of tempers and dispositions, which, if duly improved by proper studies, and sober methods of education, would, in all probability, carry them to greater heights of piety than are to be found among the generality of men. That women have no souls, is an assertion which might proceed from the teacher of a *false* religion: by the Founder of the *true*, they are regarded in a very different light. To them were communicated the first tidings of his resurrection, and they had the honour to be appointed apostles to the apostles themselves.

Whether, therefore, we consider the capacities of women for attaining *knowledge*; or the sad consequences of their being left in *ignorance*, their influence on society, as *servants*, as *wives*, as *mistresses of families*, and as *mothers*; or their constituting the *one half of the human race, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and designed for eternal life*, every way is evident the great importance of forming the female character by education. To exhibit a picture of that character, as it ought to appear, when formed, was the—

IId. Thing proposed.—The picture with which I shall present you, among other advantages, has that of antiquity. It was drawn by a masterly hand near three thousand years ago. It may be necessary, therefore, to remove some of the effects of time, and retouch the lines that have been clouded and obscured by length of years; in plain terms, to explain some parts of the description, which relate to ancient manners and customs, and show how they may be usefully applied to those of our own age and country. The description I mean, is that, left us of a virtuous woman, by the wisest of men, in the last chapter of the book of Proverbs; a description, which all mothers and mistresses should teach the female pupils under their care, to read, and learn by heart.

Prov. xxxi. 10. “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.” Such an one is to be found, but not without some care and diligence in the search. She

is well worth the pains taken in the forming her, and more to be valued by her happy possessor, than all the brightest diamonds in the mines of the east.

11. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil." A well nurtured woman is man's best and truest friend. Her fidelity is unviolable as the covenant of the Most High, and her purity unsullied as the light of heaven. Absent, as well as present, her husband relies upon her, for the preservation of his possessions, and of herself, the dearest and most precious of all. With such a steward at home, freed from care and anxiety, he goes forth to his own employment, whatever it may be. He has no occasion to rob others by sea or land; to plunder provinces, or starve nations. Instead of her squandering his substance to gratify her own vanity and folly, the economy of his wife furnishes the supplies, and nothing is wanting in due time and place.

12. "She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life." She will never abuse this confidence reposed in her, but endeavour to render herself daily more and more worthy of it. And even if her endeavours should not always meet with the desired success; if the good man should sometimes happen to be a little out of spirits, or out of temper, she will not therefore become so too. Her cheerfulness will revive and restore him. She will still "do him good, and not evil," while he lives; and if she survive him, will continue to show the same kind attention and regard to his family, and to his character.—"My Servius (said the Roman Valeria, holding in her arms the urn which contained the ashes of her husband),—My Servius, though dead to the rest of the world, can never be otherwise than alive to me."

Solomon's description of a virtuous woman consists of twenty-two verses. It is well worthy your observation, that eleven of these verses (half the number) are taken up in setting forth her *industry*, and the effects of it. I shall recite all these together, that you may see what a variety of magnificent language is made use of, to describe her different employments, to recommend simplicity of manners, and make good housewifery and honest labour to be admired, in the rich and noble, as well as the poor and obscure among women. For you must bear in mind, that in works of the



several kinds here mentioned, queens and princesses, of old time, disdained not to be occupied. You will likewise be pleased to consider, that if the rich are exempted from the necessity of working for *themselves*, they cannot be better employed than in working for the *poor*; since “the coats and garments,” made by the charity of Dorcas, were judged the best proofs of her goodness, that could be submitted to the inspection of an apostle.

13. “She seetheth wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. 19. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. 17. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. 15. She riseth also, while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. 27. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. 21. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for they are all clothed with double garments. 22. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple. 24. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant. 18. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. 14. She is like the merchants’ ships, she bringeth her food from afar. 16. She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” On account of this her marvellous and unceasing diligence, with the many and great advantages derived thereby to her family, well may it be said, as it is of her, 25. “Strength and honour are her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come.”

But the honour is not confined to herself. It extendeth to her friend and her companion in life; 23. “Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land”—That is, he is known as her husband; as a man blessed with such a wife; as indebted, perhaps, for his promotion, to the wealth acquired by her management at home (for honours are seldom open to the poor); for the splendour and elegance of his apparel, to the labour of her hands; and, it may be, for the preservation and establishment of his virtue and integrity, to the encouragement, in all that is holy, and just, and good, furnished by her example, as well as by her conversation, the nature of which is thus described—

26. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness." She thinks before she speaks; and, therefore, neither introduces a bad subject, nor disgraces a good one by an improper manner of discoursing upon it. And as charity reigns in her heart, nothing that is uncharitable proceeds out of her mouth: all is lenient and healing. To express the whole in few words, she says nothing that is foolish, and nothing that is ill-natured. But her charity is shown in deeds as well as words.

20. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy." This is yet another good effect of her economy and management. She is not only able to provide plentifully for her household, but has always something in store for the poor. Since what avails a charitable disposition, where vanity, folly, and extravagance have taken away the power to exert it? In vain is "the hand stretched out," when there is nothing in it.

Having duly considered this finished character of the virtuous woman, we shall not be surprised at the praise bestowed upon it, in the remaining verses of the chapter.

28. "Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praised her," saying, 29. "Many daughters have done virtuously; but thou excellest them all." Happy the children of such a mother; they will be living proofs of the care taken by her in their education, when she taught them to walk, by the paths of honour and virtue, to the mansions of rest and glory. Happy the husband of such a wife, who sees all things prosper under her direction, and the blessing of heaven derived to his family through her. They will all join in proclaiming, that among women who do well, honour is chiefly due to the virtuous and diligent wife, the affectionate and sensible mother.

30. "Favour," or rather, "gracefulness is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." A graceful person, and a set of fine features, are valuable things, but they are not always to be trusted; they may conceal tempers and dispositions very different from those one should have expected to find: and bitterer than wormwood must then be the disappointment of the man, who has been directed in his choice by no other considerations. This, I say, *may* be the case. It is not often

so let us hope. God forbid it should. The face ought to be an index to the mind; and when all is fair without, as it is said of the king's daughter in the psalm, "all should be glorious within." But let beauty have its due praise, and suppose what you will of it—suppose all that the poets say of it to be true: still, the Wise Man tells you, it is *vain*, it is in its nature transient, fleeting, perishing; it is the flower of the spring, which must fade in autumn; and when the blossom falls, if no fruit succeed, of what value, I pray you, is the tree? The grave is already opening for the most elegant person that moves, and the worms are in waiting to feed on the fairest face that is beholden. Labour, then, for that which endureth for ever: let your chief pains be bestowed on that part of the human composition, which shall flourish in immortal youth, when the world and all that is in it shall disappear, and come no more into mind.—"A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

31. "Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."

The crown, which her own hands have thus formed, shall be placed upon her head, as it were by general consent, even in this life, and her good deeds, celebrated in the public assemblies, shall diffuse an odour grateful as the smell of Eden, as the cloud of frankincense ascending from the holy altar. When her task is ended, the answer of a good conscience, and the blessings of all around, sweeter than the sweetest music, shall chant her to her repose; till awakened on the great morning of the world, descending angels shall introduce this daughter of Jerusalem into the joy of her Lord.

Such is the female character, and such the importance of forming it by education. Without education it cannot be formed; for we were all born equally ignorant, and are what we are by instruction. Mothers who have not been themselves taught, cannot teach their daughters: and mothers who are poor, cannot pay for having them taught. Such mothers must be therefore assisted; the children of such mothers, who appear now ranged before you, ask the continuance of your good will and kind assistance, to carry on the work of their education. Be the means of teaching *them*, and they may teach their children after them, to the years of many generations. There is no end of the good

that may be thus done. The effects of it may be found upon the earth, when our Redeemer shall return to judgment.

A school of this sort, properly managed and conducted—what is it, but a nursery of virtue and true religion, from whence will come forth, into the church of God, many a modest Rebekah, a devout Hannah, a wise Esther, an industrious Martha, an humble pious Mary; a credit to their own age, and a blessing to posterity!

Such a school is a charity of the most comprehensive nature.

It is a charity to the whole *nation*, to prevent these children from growing up in idleness and vice, to be the burden and the scandal of a christian country; and to render them, on the contrary, useful in their stations, and the glory of their times; for such are industry and goodness, in the cottage, as well as in the palace.

It is a charity to this *city*, to hinder so many innocent creatures from being tempted to walk the streets, or hide themselves in ill houses.

It is a charity to *families*; not only to those poor families, out of which these children are taken, but to those good families into which they shall be hereafter transplanted, for sober, faithful maid-servants; and, in time, a charity to their own families, when, by God's blessing, they shall be well disposed of in the world; when, having become happy wives and mothers, they shall govern houses of their own, and bring up *their* children in the like nurture and fear of the Lord.

That these good effects may be produced, the mothers must be warned not to detain the children at home a moment longer than is absolutely necessary, nor ever let them have a bad example before their eyes, when they are there.

And, as the success of a school must always depend on the fidelity and diligence of those who are over it, let *them* remember, that they receive the pay of charity; and that they cannot neglect their duty, without adding this aggravation to their crime, the abuse of one of the best intended institutions in the world.

But all is at an end at once, unless *you* are pleased to continue your kind subscriptions and contributions. If you withhold your hands, you pull down your own work. Whatever you give at other times, add something now, severally as you can afford—and add it cheerfully; for God loves



cheerfulness in giving, as in every thing else. Hard hearts and empty hands he does not love. You owe it to his blessing, that you are not in want yourselves: of his own do you give him; and how can you bestow it better?—I need not tell the female part of my audience, that, in justice to their sex, *they* are more especially concerned; since they, I am sure, have not forgotten a striking feature in the picture which has been set before them—“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.”

## DISCOURSE XLVII.

CHRISTIAN UNITY.

*Be of one mind.*—2 Cor. xiii. 11.

THE apostle, in this verse, taking leave of his Corinthians, bequeaths to them the same legacy which the blessed Jesus bequeathed to all his followers.—“Peace I leave with you,” said the Master; “my peace I give unto you.” “Finally, brethren,” says this his faithful disciple, “be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” Such are the conditions, upon the performance of which we may hope for the presence of God in the midst of us. He who “maketh men to be of one mind in a house,” delighteth to dwell in the house where they are so. The spirit of discord resides in the world, that scene of confusion, that mystic *Babel*. *Jerusalem* is a city at unity in itself; and is therefore the habitation of “the Prince of Peace.”

The *nature* of that duty, which is here recommended by St. Paul, appears to be sufficiently expressed by the word *concord*, or *unanimity*, on which the text is an exact paraphrase, το αὐτο φρονεῖτε, “Think the same thing,” or “be of one mind.”

And so necessary, indeed, is this agreement found to be for the prosecution of any design, that bad men cannot execute their schemes without a temporary concord, founded

for want of better principles, either upon the mutual interest of all parties, or a fantastical kind of honour, which answers its purpose, if it keep them together, till the deed of darkness be done, and the prey divided. Common robbers and pirates find the necessity of this. Nay, if Satan's kingdom were divided against itself, it must presently fall. But these are combinations and conspiracies against the welfare and happiness of mankind, with which, therefore, we are no further concerned, than to learn an useful lesson from our enemies, and to rest assured, that the kingdom of our Master must subsist, as all other kingdoms and societies do, by the cultivation of peace and unity among those who are the subjects of it.

If we take a view of discord, at its introduction into the world, we shall find that it was threefold. The first, between God and man, occasioned by man's transgression of the divine law, which estranged him from his Maker, whom from thenceforth he feared, as "an avenger ready to execute wrath upon him that had done evil." The second, between man and himself, caused by the accusations of conscience thereupon. The third, between man and man, owing to unruly desires and passions, continually interfering, and never to be satisfied.

In opposition to this threefold discord, introduced into the world by the evil spirit, the concord effected in the church by the good Spirit of God, is likewise threefold. Man is reconciled to God by the righteousness of Christ, through faith; to himself, by the answer of a conscience thus purged from sin; and to his brethren, by Christian charity shed abroad in his heart.

All these operations worketh one and the same Spirit; whence the unity, of which we are now speaking, is styled "the unity of the Spirit," which is represented as encircling all things in heaven and earth with a *bond* of peace. And is not the Spirit to the church, or body of Christ, what the breath is to the body natural? While *that* continues in the human frame, the parts, of which it is composed, adhere tenaciously together; but when God taketh away the breath, the contexture is soon dissolved, and they turn again to their dust. The inference suggested by this comparison, with regard to any church, whose members are disunited, and crumbled into schisms and factions, is too melancholy to be

dwelt upon. When the Spirit came down upon the apostles, on the day of Pentecost, it is said, that “they were all with one accord in one place;” and afterward, when inspired by him, we are told, “they lifted up their voices with one accord,” like the pipes of a musical instrument properly tuned, sounding forth in unison the praises of God.

To induce brethren to “dwell together in unity,” God seemeth to have employed every kind of argument. He hath erected both worlds upon the basis of concord, and made harmony to be, as it were, the life and soul of the universe. I shall endeavour to point out some striking examples of its beneficial influences, in the *natural*, the *social*, and the *spiritual* system.

In contemplating the scenes of nature, where indeed there is neither voice nor language, yet it is impossible not to observe, how the elements conspire to serve God, and to bless mankind. St. Clement, in his epistle to the Corinthians, enlarges upon this thought, to the following effect;—The heavens declare the glory of their great Creator, uniformly performing their operations in obedience to his decrees. At the word of the Almighty the sun ariseth, and knoweth his going down. The heavenly bodies run their appointed circuits in concert, and their motions clash not. Day and night, spring and summer, autumn and winter, in peaceful order give place to, and succeed each other. The earth, without murmuring or disputing, yields her increase at the stated seasons. Winds blow, and waters roll, in subserviency to the will of him who made them; the very waves of the ocean practise submission: they pass not the bounds prescribed them, but, under the regulation of that powerful voice which said, “Hitherto shall ye come, but no further,” they only serve to fill up the mighty chorus of inanimate beings, that are incessantly, in their way, rendering homage to the Lord of nature. They continue this day according to his ordinance; for all things serve him in their several places, without let, or molestation. Animals and insects, the least and most defenceless, do yet maintain, by mutual agreement, their respective societies, and preserve themselves from their numerous and potent adversaries. Thus doth all creation silently reprove the eccentric motions of contentious men, who oppose the will of God, and devour one another.

From a survey of nature, proceed we to inspect the make and constitution of man himself, who subsisteth by an union of two very different parts, a soul and a body, between which there is a kind of marriage, not to be dissolved, "till death them do part." They live together, they rejoice together, they suffer together: and when parted, as the body loses all its form and comeliness, its sight, its hearing, its voice, its motion, its very shape and figure, so the soul is described in holy writ as being restless and inquiet, till the time of reunion comes: crying out, from beneath the altar, with anxiety and earnestness, "How long, O Lord, holy and true?"

Nor less observable is the union which obtains between the members of which the body is composed, and by whose mutual good offices it is supported and preserved, according to the apostle's just and beautiful account of this matter—"God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But God hath tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

It is not more necessary that the members should be joined together in the body, than that mankind should be united in civil society. Man comes into the world utterly helpless, insomuch that, without the care and assistance of others, not a single individual of the human species could be reared, but the earth must be forthwith unpeopled. And therefore it is, that an all-wise Providence has implanted in our nature that affection which is found to prevail between parents and children, between brethren and sisters, between those of the same family, kindred, house, city, or nation; between those of the same age, or the same vocation. Such are the means used to invite and almost force men to live in peace and concord, some degree of which God hath made absolutely necessary, by rendering it impossible, as at the beginning he had declared it was not good, for man to be



alone. Hence that original union, “instituted and ordained by him in the time of man’s infancy,” to be the fountain of every other relation, the source of all those blessings and comforts which result from society.

Thus salutary are the influences of concord in the *natural* and the *social* system. Let us now see how the case stands in that *spiritual* world, of which we became citizens at our baptism.

And here, if we look up, and behold by faith the glory of the eternal Trinity, we must presently fall down, like the elders, before the throne, and in the power of the divine majesty worship the unity.—“There be Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are ONE.” Three persons; one God. Three, as evidently appears by the different offices which they have graciously vouchsafed to undertake in the work of our redemption: one in substance, and duration, and glory, and majesty, and power, and might, and dominion. And as they are one, so all the angels and blessed spirits in the courts of heaven make their sound to be heard as one, in blessing, and praising, and magnifying them, for ever and ever. Not a discordant note is heard in all that celestial choir, while “they rest not day or night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!”

From heaven we descend again to earth, with him who did so, for us men, and for our salvation, to the end that as body and soul are one man, so God and man might be one Christ, who was to live and to die for us; to suffer, and to save; as man to suffer, and as God to save. He could not have suffered, unless he had been man; he could not have saved by suffering, unless he had been God,—“God manifest in the flesh.” By this amazing and most beneficent union, the law was kept, the ransom paid, sin done away, Satan overcome, death swallowed up, immortality brought to light, man redeemed, hell confounded, earth made to rejoice, and heaven peopled with glorified saints.

By the union of God and man in the person of Christ, another union was effected between Christ and the church. For is the vine united to the branches that spring from it?—“I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Is the head joined to the body?—“God hath made him head over all things, to the church, which is his body.” Is there a strict union

between man and wife? "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." By means of this divine junction, the blessings which Christ obtained by his death and passion, become ours.—"As the branches cannot bear fruit, except they abide in the vine, no more can we, except we abide in him," and so "partake of his root and fatness." From him, as the head, "the whole body of the church, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, to the edifying of itself in love." And if we consider the church as being espoused to the Lamb, she thereby becomes endowed with his excellencies, she takes his name, and shares his unspeakable dignity, his everlasting love, and almighty protection. These are the happy effects of the union between Christ and the church.

One more consequence should follow from it, and would to God it were every where visible, *viz.* an union among Christians. Joined to one common head, they should be joined likewise to each other, "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free. Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." By concord in the church, the kingdom of Christ is established on earth, as it is in heaven, where there is no rebellion, or opposition to the will of God, but all are unanimous in doing it. By the gospel, enmity was abolished, and never should have been heard of more. All nations, however different before in rites, ceremonies, languages, and tempers, were called to the same grace, incorporated into one city of peace, and made to communicate with each other in holy offices, in prayers and in sacraments, in devotion and charity, living together in the house of their heavenly Father, and eating of one bread at his table.—"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

There was a time, and it is pleasing to look back to it,

when a Christian, furnished with proper credentials from his bishop, might travel through the world, from east to west, and from north to south, and be received to communion with his brethren, in any part of the globe then known. There will be a time, and it is comfortable to look forward to it, when infidelity, heresy, and schism, shall come to an end, and there shall be no contention among the redeemed, but in giving glory and honour, and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne. In the mean season, as they will stand fairest for heaven, who live in concord upon earth, let us consider how we may best perform this part of our duty.

And here, we may, it is presumed, lay it down for one rule, that he who would live in peace and harmony with his brethren, his kinsfolk, and his neighbours, must himself be first reconciled to his Maker.—“Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace ;” be at peace with him, and thine own conscience, and then thou shalt be at peace with all around thee. Sin is the universal leaven, which by its fermentation sours the temper. While the mind is troubled and disquieted, unsettled and uncertain, with regard to its spiritual concerns ; while it is under the guilt and dominion of a lust, not willing to break its chain, and yet galled with wearing it ; the man will be fretful and peevish, quarrelsome and contentious, in his conversation with others, venting the uneasiness which he feels within, on all who have the misfortune to be near him. Whereas, let him “return to the Almighty” by a deep and hearty repentance, and “put away iniquity from him ;” and a sense of heaven’s mercy in effecting his deliverance will quickly “purge out the old leaven ;” joy and love will diffuse themselves into every corner of his heart, which will now overflow with tenderness and kindness toward those with whom he is concerned.

In proof of this assertion, let the appeal be made to a matter of fact within every one’s experience. A person coming down from the altar, after having communicated, feels no sentiments but those of fervent charity toward all men. And why ? Because, having repented him of his sins, and had the pardon of them sealed to him in the holy sacrament, there is then such a sense of God’s mercy through Christ impressed upon his soul, as inclines, and even compels him to forgive and love others, as God hath loved and for-

given him. We should justly regard him as a monster, who was, at that time, disposed to hatred and contention. Wherever the Spirit of God comes with the word of reconciliation, strife and animosity presently give place, and disappear. When the eucharist has been celebrated, it is with Christians, at the holy table, as it was with the family in the ark; the dove has been there with the olive branch, and the waters are subsided. Only, therefore, let them, from time to time, by proper spiritual exercises, by reading, meditation, and prayer, renew the impressions then made, reducing their religion from a profession, put on at stated seasons, to a constant uniform principle of action in common life, which gives us the real character of every man; only let this be done, and the tempers, which they bring from the Lord's table, will continue with them, and become those of every day and every hour. The primitive Christians communicated daily, and all Christians should be fit to *communicate* daily, because they should be fit to *die* daily, standing habitually prepared with dispositions of gratitude and duty to their heavenly Father, of love and affection toward their earthly brethren.

A *second* rule for the entertainment of concord, shall be this:—Let every man endeavour, by the grace of Christ, to moderate his desires of earthly things. “Whence,” saith St. James to the Christians of his time, “come wars and fightings among you?” Whence come schisms and heresies in the church, factions and seditious in the state, enmities and heart-burnings between families and individuals? “Come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members?” An inordinate thirst after power, pleasure, fame, or profit, is at the bottom, whatever may be pretended. The humble and contented man quarrels with nobody, since, fully satisfied with the station in which God hath placed him, and intent upon discharging the duties of it, he is not eager after any of those things, for which others are, with so much animosity, contending. But how can we wonder that there is strife on earth, when we read, that “there was war in heaven?” nor could peace be restored in those blissful regions, till the evil principle, which disturbed it, was ejected.

The *third* and last rule which I shall mention, as proper to be observed for the preservation of concord amongst us,



is to defend the just rights of our ecclesiastical establishment which connects and connects us together in one communion, as members of a church happily freed from the errors and the corruptions of Rome, and put under a government and discipline constructed, as far as the times would permit, upon the platform of primitive Christianity. Those wise and good men, who found it necessary to abolish the usurped jurisdiction of the pope in these kingdoms, saw plainly, at the same time, that religion could not even be *reformed*, as it ought to be, or indeed the very existence of it continued, without proper authority in proper hands. And to argue, that, because a right may be abused, therefore there neither is, nor ought to be, any such right in a community, is a method of reasoning, which, if it could ever pass in the world for sound and conclusive, would soon banish order and peace out of it for evermore. We have no cause to expect, that *angels* should come down from heaven, to take upon them the administration of government; and authority in the hands of *men* must ever, like all other things, be liable to abuse. But he who therefore fancies, it were better there should be none, would find himself strangely mistaken, on making the experiment. The truth is, that the great body of mankind must be directed by some or other, both in temporals and spirituals. And the present question really is not, whether we shall subscribe to articles of religion, but, as it will appear in the end, who shall draw them up, and impose the subscription; in one word, whether the church of England will preserve in her hands, the power of granting a toleration to others, or be reduced to the necessity of accepting it from others, if they will grant it to her, which it is ten thousand to one that they never will, should God, for our sins, permit them to effect a change, and get into power.

Loud were the clamours, in the last century, against the tyranny of the hierarchy. Its demolition was attempted and achieved by the advocates for what was then called *religious liberty*. When this was done, the poor, ignorant, deluded populace expected that the kingdom of Christ should immediately appear, and that from thenceforth they should be subject, in matters of conscience, to him only. But how different was the event! The little finger of presbytery proved to be thicker than the loins of prelacy. Those who

were of a *different persuasion* were now told, that *toleration* was *the establishment of iniquity by a law*. And yet the proceedings of presbytery itself, where found to be mild and moderate, when compared with the insufferable insolence and cruelty of its supplanter, independency.

It was proposed, in those days, to make Christians of one heart and mind, and to introduce a heaven upon earth, by the destruction of the church, which, though the only centre of unity, was, at that time, thought to stand in its way. But so far was this from being the case, that, in the few years between her fall and resurrection, there sprang up a multitude of religious sects, contradicting, reviling, and persecuting each other. Truth was torn in pieces, and blown about by the breath of contending factions, so that a remnant of it was hardly to be found; and men were either driven back to popery, or tempted to an atheistical disbelief of all religion.

How far the same consequences might follow the execution of a plan for admitting every man into the ministry, who will only declare, in general, that he “believes the scriptures,” which all the heretics of former ages, and all the sectaries of the last century, would at any time have declared—deserves your most serious consideration.

Peace, without all doubt, is an admirable blessing. But in giving up truth for it, we should, in the first place, pay too dear for the purchase; and, in the second, be defrauded, after all, of that for which we bargained.

There are times, when the most peaceable men in the world will find it their bounden duty to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;” and it is submitted, whether the present be not such a time, since, to erase from our services (if indeed we shall be permitted to have any) the grand fundamental article of that faith, is the avowed end and design of the projected reformation. He who exhorted his Corinthians to be “of one mind,” never thought it a matter of *indifference*, whether they were so in the belief and propagation of TRUTH, or of ERROR. To speak out plainly—If Arianism be a truth, it is certainly high time that it were established; but if it be an error, and one of the most pernicious tendency, the church cannot be too vigilant in guarding those fences, which the prevarications and evasions of her adversaries made it necessary to

raise for her security. One thing in the history of Arianism is worthy notice, that its partisans, within less than forty years after they had rejected the Nicene doctrine, drew up seventeen different confessions of faith, and when they had done, would abide by none of them. With what propriety men of this cast are wont to exclaim against *creed makers*, or how well qualified they are to have the modelling of *articles* and *liturgies*, you will determine; and may God Almighty enable us upon this, and every other occasion, as far as lieth in us, to maintain *truth*, and preserve *unity*; to reject *error*, and avoid *confusion*.

## DISCOURSE XLVIII.

DUTY OF REPENTANCE ILLUSTRATED.

*The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.*  
—Jer. viii. 7.

THE whole passage is well deserving of attention, both for matter and manner: the matter, of the utmost importance; the manner, to the last degree engaging and affecting.

The day of Jerusalem's visitation drew near: destruction was coming upon her, like a whirlwind out of the north. Jeremiah appeared with a commission from above to predict as much, and withal to assign the reason. It was—not that the people had sinned—more or less all have sinned: not that they had grievously sinned—all sin may be forgiven: but that, having sinned, and having grievously sinned, they refused to repent, without doing which, no forgiveness can be obtained; it cannot indeed be expected. That had happened to Israel, which happens often to others: temptations to evil had prevailed; single acts had been improved into habits, and habits had grown inveterate, till they had at

length lost the power, and even the desire, to reform and amend.

In this situation of things, the Almighty is introduced, expostulating with his people;—"Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not turn again?" In the whole circle of common life, where men are usually guided by common sense, is there any instance to be found of a similar conduct? Was it ever seen, was it ever heard, that when a man had experienced the misfortune of falling, he should not wish and endeavour to arise again; that when he had, by mistake, gone out of his way, he should not, upon better information, be desirous of returning into it?—"Why then is this people of Jerusalem sidden back by a perpetual backsliding"—one that is never to cease, or have an end? "They hold fast deceit"—and knowing it to be but deceit—for such every sinner well knows it to be—yet "they refuse to return."

God is next pleased to speak of himself (after the manner of men) as inclining his ear, and, with the affection of a parent, fondly listening to catch the first accents of sorrow and contrition, that should break forth from the relenting heart of his offending child:—"I hearkened, and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" No remorse, no reflection, no sensibility; hardened in vice, and regardless of danger, they pursued with fury and impetuosity their way to perdition; "every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle."

This earnest expostulation and tender complaint are succeeded by a beautiful apostrophe to the birds of the air, that species of them styled *birds of passage*. They by instinct return annually, at a set time, to the country they had left; whereas, by all the reasoning and all the exhortation in the world, obdurate man cannot be prevailed upon to forsake his iniquity, and return to God who made him.—"Even the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

This is a method of instruction often pursued in the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament.-- "Ask the



beasts, and they shall teach you; behold the fowls of the air, which sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns," yet can read a lecture to those who do. Thus the sluggard is sent for information and correction to the ant, the unthankful to the ox, the distrustful to the ravens; and here, the wilful impenitent is placed under the tuition of the stork and the turtle, the crane and the swallow. The dumb creatures are made to reprove the madness and folly of proud rationals; and the argument enters forcibly into the understanding, while the image, under which it is conveyed, delights the imagination.

The representation of the duty of repentance thus set before us by the prophet, seems peculiarly adapted to the present time of the year, and the solemn season upon which we have just entered, and therefore may suggest some useful considerations on the *nature* of the duty, the *motives* to its performance, and the *rules* by which it should be conducted.

I. Respecting the *nature* of the duty; the similitude adopted in the text directs us to consider it as a *return*, a *travelling back* our steps, as the birds of passage return, or come back, to the country from which they had departed. And this, indeed, is the idea generally employed in the Old Testament—"Return, O backsliding daughter; return from your evil ways; return unto the Lord your God; turn thou us, and we shall be turned;" and the like. But the expression being figurative, it must be opened and explained in literal terms. In order to which, it may be observed, that the word chiefly used in the New Testament to denote the duty of repentance, signifies *change of mind*; and as practice flows from principle (for as man thinks, so will he act), a change of conduct is naturally and necessarily implied; for we should with difficulty be brought to believe, in any case of moment, that he had changed the former, who did not, in consequence, change the latter also. Now the course of a man's thinking, speaking, and acting, by an easy metaphor, common to all ages and countries, is styled his *way*, in which he is therefore said to *proceed*, *advance*, *return*.

We may then define repentance to be, *A change of mind, operating in a change of conduct*. But we shall become still better acquainted with the nature of it, if we view its process, and resolve it into its several parts, in due order.

The leading step in the process must of necessity be *con-*

*rection*: since he cannot be persuaded to repent, who is not first convinced that he has sinned: no man will think of returning *into* the right way, unless he be made sensible that he has wandered *out* of it. To produce this conviction, is not so easy a task as at first sight it may seem to be; since, when evil is pursued, it is pursued under the appearance of good; by such appearance the sinner for a time is deceived, blinded, deluded, infatuated; and in this state sometimes continues to pass his life, through mere indolence, inattention, want of consideration; whence, in the Latin language, repentance is denoted by a word signifying, *coming to one's self, coming to one's senses, growing wise again*, as before the delusion took place. Conviction is produced gradually. Upon some hint given to a man, either from within or from without, he begins to suspect himself in the wrong; and then, if he be honest enough to prosecute the inquiry, discovers at length that he actually is so. Sometimes it is flashed upon the mind at once—He awakes, and the dream is at an end. Under the direction of that blessed Spirit, whose office, we are told, it is, to “convince, or convict the world of sin,” it is produced by various means, by disappointments, by crosses, by losses, by sickness, by the death of a friend, by a passage in scripture, or a discourse upon one, by the incidents of common life, or the changes that happen in the natural world; in short, there is hardly a circumstance of so trivial a nature, but that a kind Providence, in some instance or other, has been pleased to make it instrumental to this salutary purpose. On the brethren of Joseph, after an interval of more than twenty years, the conviction was wrought by the usage they experienced from him, when unknown, in Egypt. It put them upon reflecting, of what offence they could have been guilty in the former part of life, which might deserve to be punished in this particular manner. Conscience stepped forth, and gave the necessary information.—“We are verily guilty concerning our *brother*; therefore is this distress come upon us.” The case of David was of a more obstinate nature. A delineation of his crime under a parable was not sufficient to awaken him. Nothing could do this, but a direct, home, personal application—“*Thou* art the man.” He started from a deep sleep of ten months, and fell prostrate on the dust, before his God—“I have sinned!” Let every sinner,

when tempted to despair, recollect the answer, and bless the gracious Being from whom it proceeded—“The Lord hath put away thy sin.”

The next step to conviction, in the process of repentance, is *sorrow*. The man who has offended his Maker, and is become thoroughly sensible that he has done so, and of the consequences of his having done so, cannot but be grieved to find himself in such a situation; for which reason, repentance, in the Greek language, is sometimes denominated by a word implying, *after-concern*; indeed, our English term, *I repent*, in the general acceptation of it, is little more than equivalent to, *I am sorry*. If the sorrow arise merely from fear of punishment, it is called in the language of the schools, *attrition*, and is deemed the lowest and least honourable species of repentance;\* if from a desire to please God, and a tender sense of having displeased so good a Father, it is styled *contrition*, and is of a more generous and noble kind. The degree of this sorrow is varied almost infinitely by the different temperaments of mind and body in the penitents, and the different views under which sin presents itself to their several imaginations. And, therefore, the same degree is not to be exacted of all. By enthusiasm it has been, not unfrequently, aggravated even to frenzy and madness. In scripture it is drawn with an aspect perfectly sober, but yet described, in many instances, as very intense, like that occasioned by the languors of sickness in its last stage, or the pain arising from dislocated or broken bones, and venting itself in complaints and lamentations, in sighs and tears. Indeed, the prophets exhort us (and, by adopting their expressions into her services, the church directs us actually to assert that we follow their exhortations) to “turn to the Lord our God,” not only “with fasting,” but “with *weeping*.” There are temporal calamities, which can draw tears plentifully from most persons; nay, a fictitious representation of them, we find, can produce the effect. Spiritual ones, perhaps, would do the same, if we felt them as we ought to feel them; as due retirement and meditation would cause us to feel them; and as we shall one day feel them, when death shall be seen levelling his dart at our pillow, and the throne of judgment rising to the view, beyond him. But, as was

\* See “Priestley on the Corruptions,” &c. and Burnet there referred to. ii. 223.

before observed, the degrees of sorrow, as well as the modes of expressing it, will vary, as belonging more to the sensitive nature, than to the rational. And for the avoiding all scruple and doubtfulness on this head, it may be laid down for certain, that the least degree of sorrow is sufficient, if it produce a reformation; the greatest insufficient, if it do not.

A third step in the process of repentance is *confession*. One of an ingenious mind, who is heartily sorry for his offences, will not be ashamed or backward to own that sorrow. In transactions with a fellow creature, we cannot hope that a fault will be overlooked, which has not been acknowledged; or pardon granted, before it has been asked. —“ I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.”

A fourth step in the process of repentance is *resolution to amend*. A sorrowful confession of what we have done amiss will of course occasion a wish that it had not been done, a desire to undo it so far as it may be possible, and, above all, a resolution not to do the same again, but to take a course directly the reverse of that which we had before taken; in other words, to alter, to reform, to amend our lives.

One step more remains, and only one, but that very steep and difficult of ascent, which is, to carry what we have resolved into execution. It is this which finishes and crowns all the rest, being indeed the step, for the attainment of which all the rest were taken, and which, therefore, renders them of any value, as it shows the penitent to have been sincere in taking them, to have considered them not as efficacious in themselves, but as means to an end—an end, thus, and thus alone to be accomplished.

Such is the *nature* of repentance. It begins with conviction of sin, passes on to sorrow of the heart, confession of the mouth, and resolution of amendment; and it terminates in reformation of life.

## II. The *motives* to it come now to be considered.

Evil to be avoided, and good to be obtained, are the motives, which influence and produce all human actions.

To escape from the rigours and storms of winter, and to enjoy the sweets of a milder and more gracious season, is the instinctive cause, why the heaven-taught monitors, to whom we are referred, migrate from one country to another. It is to avoid the judgments of God, and partake of his



mercies, that man is called to repent. The parallel is evident—"The stork, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow, know the time of their returning;" and the *notice* to their return is comprehended and implied in the *time* of it, which is the spring—"But my people know not the judgment of the Lord;" they know not, they consider not this tremendous wintry tempest, from which they ought to fly, in like manner, by repentance, to the all-enlivening, cheering, and comforting spring of unbounded light and love.

The evil, then, to be avoided, is "the judgment of God," consequent upon sin, and sure to overtake it, if unrepented of. Sin, which is the transgression of the law, cannot but be noticed by Him who gave that law; and if noticed, must be punished, either in this life, or that which is to come. No principle can be plainer than this: for otherwise, a law would serve no purpose but that of bringing contempt upon the maker of it. There is not an instance, perhaps, upon record of any age or nation, where the idea of punishment has not been connected with that of guilt; and the certainty of such connexion is the great subject of all the scriptures.

Sin is often punished in this life; much oftener than we are aware; indeed so often, that we may say to you as Moses to Israel:—"If you have sinned against the Lord, be sure your sin will find you out." We see how much this is the case in the sacred history, where we are admitted within the veil, and the rationale of the divine proceedings in particular cases is unfolded to us. When we are ignorant of that rationale, as, without special information from above, we must be, respecting the course of God's ordinary providence in the world, it is unsafe, and it may be not only uncharitable, but unjust, to judge in this manner of the calamities which befall our *neighbour*. But there would be no harm, when calamities befall *ourselves*, if we should take a retrospect of our conduct, and in that conduct endeavour to discover the cause that might have induced our heavenly Father to send them. It will not be saying too much, I believe, to say, that many times, if the search were made with diligence and fidelity, we *should* discover it: at least, were we not able to particularize, we should discover enough in general to satisfy us, that, be our sufferings at any time what they may, we do not suffer more than we deserve to

suffer; but that each of us, without any tincture of superstition or hypocrisy, may from heartfelt conviction exclaim, with the good psalmist, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and thou, of very faithfulness, hast caused me to be troubled." Every fresh instance of this sort is indeed only a fresh confirmation of that grand and most important truth, which should ever be uppermost in our thoughts, that, all natural evil is the consequence and punishment of moral. Remove the latter by repentance, and God will remove the former, when he sees that it has performed the work and produced the effect intended.

It would be in vain, however, to dissemble, that, in the present state, as is the offence, such is not always the punishment. Notoriously profligate sinners often partake not, to appearance, the common evils of life, but pass their days in prosperity, affluence, and health, and die without any visible tokens of the divine displeasure. The fact is indisputable; and it was a stumbling-block by very good men of old time, not without great difficulty surmounted. The conflict occasioned by it in the human mind is described at large in the 73d Psalm, and in the 12th chapter of our prophet Jeremiah; nor will believers fail sometimes to experience a temptation of a similar nature, while the object shall continue to present itself, that is, while the word shall last.

To take off, in some measure, the force of the objection, it must be remarked, that, besides those judgments of God, which lie open to the observation of mankind, there are others, even in the present life, of a secret and invisible kind, known only to the party by whom they are felt. There is a court constantly sitting within, from whose jurisdiction the criminal can plead no exemption, and from whose presence he cannot fly; there is evidence produced against him, which he can neither disprove nor evade; and there, a just sentence is not only passed, but forthwith executed upon him, by the infliction of torments severe and poignant as the strokes of whips or scorpions; torments, exquisite in proportion to the sensibility of the part affected; torments, of which he sees the beginning, but is never likely to see the end.

Trust not to appearances. Men are not what they seem. In the brilliant scenes of splendour and magnificence, of luxury and dissipation, surrounded by the companions of his pleasures, and the flatterers of his vices, amidst the flashes

of wit and merriment, when all wears the face of gaiety and festivity, the profligate often reads his doom, written by the hand, whose characters are indelible. Should he turn away his eyes from beholding it, and succeed in the great work, during the course of his revels, yet the time will come, when from scenes like these he must retire, and be alone: and then, as Dr. South states the question, in a manner not to be answered,—“What is all that a man can enjoy in this way for a week, a month, or a year, compared with what he feels for one hour, when his conscience shall take him aside, and rate him by himself?”

There is likewise another hour which will come, and that soon—the hour when life must end; when the accumulated wealth of the east and the west, with all the assistance it is able to procure, will not be competent to obtain the respite of a moment; when the impenitent sinner shall be called—and must obey the call—to leave every thing, and give up his accounts to his Maker, of the manner in which he has spent his time, and employed his talents. Of what is *said* by such, at that hour, we know not much. Care is generally taken that we never should. Of what is *thought*, we know nothing. O merciful God, grant that we never may!

It will still be alleged, perhaps, that instances are not wanting of the worst of men, in principle and practice, going out of life with no less composure than the best. I believe these instances to be very rare indeed. But admit the allegation, that there are some; what do they prove? What can they prove? Why, certainly, unless all that has been conceived and uttered by the wise and good of every age, concerning God and religion, right and wrong, virtue and vice, truth and falsehood—unless all this be a mere dream, they can prove only that such persons die in a state of ignorance, stupidity, or judicial blindness, with hardened hearts, and seared consciences. When the drunkard ceases to feel in the morning the usual pains and penalties of his last night's debauch, he fancies the strength of his constitution has triumphed over the mischief of intemperance, and that the bitterness of death is past. Alas, poor man! The fact is, that his constitution, by his ill treatment of it, has lost the sense of natural good and evil, implanted in it for its preservation; he has no longer that motive left to reformation, and is therefore sealed up to perdition, which is

coming upon him, fierce, speedy, and irresistible, like an armed man.

But however, by habits either of sensuality or infidelity, the conscience may be drugged, and laid asleep in this world, let it not be forgotten, that (whether some men believe so much or not) there is another world beyond this, in which it must awake, to sleep no more. And if in this world some sins are punished, as we have assurance they are, while others of far greater magnitude and more atrocious guilt are permitted to go unpunished, it will follow, by a consequence which the wit of man cannot gainsay, should he study for a thousand years to do it, that such sins, not being punished *here*, will most inevitably be punished *there*. Else were God unrighteous indeed!—As touching the nature of those after-punishments, I shall only say (the misgivings and forebodings of him who has deserved them will speak the rest), that they are such as will be inflicted, after the expiration of the day of mercy, by inexorable justice and almighty power.

We have taken a view of the evil to be avoided by repentance. It consists in the temporal judgments of God, the terrors of a guilty conscience, and the pains of eternal death.

The good to be obtained needeth only to be mentioned in very few words. It must have offered itself to your thoughts, as we passed along, branching into these opposite particulars:—

The light of heaven shining upon our tabernacle, the divine favour attending us and ours, through every stage of our existence, sanctifying prosperity, which, by the displeasure of God, may be rendered a curse, and turning adversity itself into a blessing, while it becomes an instrument to rectify the disorders of our minds, to soften the few hard places remaining in our hearts, to smooth and lay even the little roughnesses in our tempers; thus gradually and gently preparing us for our departure hence, and fitting us for the company, to which we are going, of “the spirits of just men made perfect.”

The answer of a good conscience, diffusing peace and serenity over all the powers and faculties of the soul, refreshing like the dew falling on the top of Hermon, exhilarating as the fragrance of the holy oil descending from the head of



Aaron; sweetening the converse of society, and the charities of active life, and affording, in retirement and solitude, pleasures concealed from the world around us, joys in which "a stranger intermeddled not," enlivening the morning, brightening the noon, and gilding the evening of our days; effecting what is so difficult to be effected, and what nothing else can effect, at once making life pleasant, and death desirable, as leading to something still superior to all we feel here below.

The reward in heaven, the glory that shall be revealed, to be known only when it *shall* be revealed; the bliss without alloy, and without end, which he cannot conceive who has not experienced, and which he who has experienced can find no human language able to express.

Such evil is to be avoided, and such good to be obtained, by repentance, that plank remaining to a shipwrecked world, on which alone we can escape to the haven of rest. All have sinned, and, therefore, in order to be saved, all must repent. It is surely the least they can do; and to those who do this, through faith in the blood of Christ purifying the conscience from sins past, and the power of the Spirit of Christ supporting and carrying them on for the time to come, exceeding great and precious promises, comprehending and confirming all that has been advanced, are made in every part of scripture, which, before this audience, there is no occasion to recite.

III. Some short *rules* shall be laid down for the conduct of our repentance through the several parts, of which, under the first head of this discourse, we have shown it to be composed; that so it may be made to answer the character already given of its power and efficacy, under the second.

1. *Stifle not convictions.* The world, through all its vicissitudes, natural, political, and moral, the casualties of youth and the increasing infirmities of age, is full of warnings and admonitions. Day unto day sheweth this speech, night unto night uttereth this knowledge. We hear, but resolve to forget. Many of the employments and most of the amusements of life are engaged in, that man may fly from himself, and from his own thoughts. Attend to every suggestion of this salutary kind, from what quarter soever it may proceed: attend, and slight it not. It is the voice of God calling you to repentance. Listen, and obey.

2. *Be serious.* The subject will cause any man to become so, who considers it as he ought to do; who reflects, what sin is in the sight of God, what sorrow it occasioned to the Son of God, what destruction it hath brought upon the world, and is about to bring upon himself, unless prevented by a timely repentance. Memorable are the words of a great statesman of our own, when, because he seemed pensive and thoughtful, toward the close of his days, some court buffoons were sent to divert him.—“While we laugh, all things are serious about us. God is serious, when he preserveth us, and hath patience toward us. Christ was serious, when he died for us. The Holy Spirit, is serious, when he striveth with us. The scripture is serious, when it is read before us. Sacraments are serious, when they are administered to us. The whole creation is serious, in serving God and us. Angels are serious above, while they wait for our conversion. Evil spirits are serious below, in endeavouring to effect our destruction—And shall man not be serious, who of all other creatures hath most reason to be so?”

3. *Be frequent in confession.* The church enters upon her service with it in public, and every one should do the same in private. If you feel not that warmth of devotion you could wish to feel when you begin, you may experience it before you end your confession. The very repetition of proper sentiments, in proper language, will produce the affections which they are intended to express. Begin, as an act of obedience to him who has assured us, that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Such an act of obedience may be rewarded with every thing else that is necessary—“This I had, because I kept thy commandments.”

4. *Resolve speedily.* Fruitless is sorrow for having done amiss, if it issue not in a resolution to do so no more. And in forming this resolution, no time is to be lost. He who doth not resolve to day, will be much less disposed to resolve to morrow. Procrastination, in many cases, is dangerous: in this it is often fatal.

5. *Renew your resolutions daily.* Else will they be soon forgotten, and consequently never carried into execution. It is the interest of the passions that they should be forgotten. Cares and pleasures will be apt to efface them;

temptations will return, and prevail; a relapse will be the consequence; and all the work must be entered upon anew, with difficulties increased, strength diminished, and courage appalled. To prevent this from happening, no better method can be devised, than every day to renew the impressions once produced. During so short an interval, the enemy can make no very considerable breach in the works—none but what may be easily repaired, and put again into a state of defence.

But after all —“ Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” It is he who granted repentance unto life; and it is he who alone can perfect the good work, when it is begun in us. To him, therefore, let prayer be made, without ceasing, at morning, and at evening, and at noon day, and that instantly. And when can we with more propriety or more effect prefer our petitions, than at this time, that He would be pleased to prosper the word that hath been spoken, to the purpose for which it hath been spoken; that they who have not yet begun their repentance may forthwith begin it; and that they who have begun it may be enabled happily to complete it; that all may make a due use of the present holy season, which to many may perhaps return no more; and no single person leave this place liable to the reproach of God by his prophet, that, when “ the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed time, and the turtle, the crane, and the swallow, know the time of their coming”—he should not “ know the judgment of the Lord.”

## DISCOURSE XLIX.

THE DEVOUT SOLDIER.

*Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.—Acts x. 31.*

IN the histories of this world we read of conquests gained by the sword and spear; we view the celebrated heroes of ancient and modern times marking out their progress through

kingdoms and empires with havoc and desolation, while *every battle* of those warriors is *with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood*. How different the scenes presented to us in that portion of sacred story, styled “The Acts of the Apostles,” or the exploits of those who were sent forth to subdue the world to the obedience of Christ! Here, too, we read of conquests; but they were gained by faith and patience, by prayers and sermons, by meekness and long-suffering. Here we behold a mighty Prince making his progress upon the earth; but that Prince is *the Prince of Peace*, and his progress is the progress of salvation: he makes war only against the unruly passions and affections of sinful men; and all his desire is, to command a willing people in the day of his power.

Hitherto the apostles, in compliance with their orders, had confined themselves to the Jews, as the gospel must be first preached to that once highly favoured people. But now the hour was come, when the great mystery of divine mercy, the call of the nations, should begin to be unfolded, and God would show some specimen of the riches of his grace reserved in store for the heathen world. St. Peter was therefore sent, with the glad tidings of a Saviour, to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, on the circumstances of whose call and conversion, as they are very particularly related in the chapter from whence the text is taken, I shall proceed to offer some considerations, which, it is hoped, may be of use to us all.

“There was a certain man in Cæsarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”

From the name and profession of Cornelius, it appears that he was a Roman, and, consequently, a heathen. But the character here given of him makes it evident that he must have been in some sort a convert to Judaism, and instructed out of the law; otherwise the Holy Ghost would not have called him *a devout man*; he could not be said to have *feared God*, that is, the true God, whom, as a heathen, he could not know, much less worship and serve by *prayer* and *alms-deeds*. He was therefore one of those who were styled *proselytes of the gate*, not circumcised, and made complete Jews, but taught the general principles of true religion, the



knowledge of God, and a Saviour who was to come, and permitted to attend and offer up their devotions in the outer court of the temple, at the times of sacrifice. The Ethiopian nobleman, who came to Jerusalem to worship, and was baptized by Philip, must have been in the same state with Cornelius, and so became prepared, like him, to receive the gospel, when it was preached to him.

1. God Almighty hath his servants in all places, and in all conditions, even those wherein one would least expect to find them. The profession of a *soldier* is generally thought very unfavourable to religion, however it comes about; for certainly, if there be any one man to whom religion is more necessary at all times than it is to another, a soldier is that man. His life is *always in his hand*, always liable to be taken from him, therefore should he not *forget God's law*. Death besets him on every side, in its most terrible forms, and threatens, each moment, to call him away to judgment; therefore it becometh him to stand ready, with his accounts prepared. A sect that arose here in England during the last century, held it unlawful to bear arms, but without grounds. For when the soldiers applied to that most rigorous and austere of preachers, St. John the Baptist, he did not exhort them to quit their profession, as he would doubtless have done, had it been unlawful in itself, but only recommended a proper behaviour to them:—*Do violence, says he, to no man, and be content with your wages*. So that there is no natural or necessary connexion between irreligion and the profession of a soldier. On the contrary, true religion never appears to more advantage than it doth in that character. It pleased God to accept a person of the military profession as the first fruits of the Gentile world. And he must be a person of very little sensibility, who is not charmed with the account given us of Cornelius, an officer in the Roman army.

2. *He was a devout man*—not only what the world calls “a decent character, a good sort of man,” by which is often intended a goodness with no religion, and very little morality; but a thoroughly pious man, one that *feared God*, that set God always before him, and regarded *him* in all he said and did. Such a fear is the first and principal part of divine wisdom, and it is peculiarly excellent in a soldier, because he who fears God as he ought to do, will fear nobody else.

True courage must be founded in true religion, for a bad man cannot be a brave man, with his eyes open, and his thoughts about him. Nor could a general give a better exhortation to his army, than that given by Christ to his disciples; *Fear not them which kill the body, and, after that, have no more that they can do; but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear. Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both body and soul in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* And an heathen historian,\* who was himself a great commander, could say, that “the soldier who first serves God, and then obeys his captain, may confidently hope to overcome his enemy.”

3. *Cornelius feared God, with all his house.* Piety, like the sun, communicates itself to all around it. Every family is a little kingdom, of which the master is prince; it is a little flock, of which the master is shepherd, appointed by heaven to govern it in righteousness, and to guide it in the way of peace. Such is the true use of that power which God hath granted unto men, from him that ruleth over millions, to him that hath only a single servant. The manners of a family depend upon those of the master. His principles and practices soon diffuse themselves through the house, and the piety or profaneness, the sobriety or intemperance, the sloth or diligence of servants, discover to the world the nature of that fountain from which they flow. *Cornelius feared God, with all his house.* He set a good example, and took care that they should follow it. He honoured the name of God himself, and it was not blasphemed by his domestics. While he was proceeding to heaven, he did not send them, or let them go to hell, but carried them all with him. He feared God, with *all* his house; there was not one wicked or disorderly person in it. And now, recollect who this man was. He was a soldier; he was a Roman. How will his example, in this respect, be held up at the day of judgment, to the shame and condemnation of Christians, who have never once thought of following it!

4. *Cornelius gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.* True religion consisteth in the love of God, and of man for God's sake. The former shows itself in the exercise of piety; the latter in that of charity. One lead,

\* Xenophon.

us to God, as the only person who can supply our wants; the other induceth us to supply those of our neighbours. Prayer is powerful, and alms are powerful, and when they join their forces, omnipotence itself is pleased to be overcome by them. Alms give wings to prayer, causing it to ascend swiftly toward heaven; and prayer gives strength to alms, enabling them to follow after, till they enter the everlasting doors together, and present themselves before the Most High. They rise, like vapours, from the earth, and return again, like them, with a blessing. But in order that they may produce this effect, a man must not be niggardly in his alms, he must not be inconstant in his prayers. — “Cornelius gave *much* alms to the people, and prayed to God *always*,” that is, at all the stated and proper times of prayer.

5. From the account which Cornelius gives of himself to St. Peter at the latter end of the chapter, it appears, that he was accustomed to join *fasting* to prayer.—“Four days ago,” says he, “I was *fasting* until this hour.” Prayer is an ascent of the soul to God. The corruptible body presseth down the soul, and hinders it in its ascent. The more that body is fed and pampered, the more it clogs and weighs down the soul. Abstinence from food, therefore, has been enjoined by God, and practised by his people, both Jews and Christians, among other ends, for the increase and furtherance of devotion. And experience will soon teach us the wisdom and fitness of such injunction; for there is not more difference between one man and another, than there is between the same man and himself, when full, and when fasting; before his meals, and after them. Fumes from the stomach arise into the head; they cloud the understanding, and render the mind dull and heavy; they make a man unfit for the business of this world, much more for that of another. From Cornelius we learn, therefore, what he must have learned from the people of God, that indulgence puts an end to devotion, and abstinence is the best preparative for prayer.

6. Cornelius was praying in his house at the ninth hour of the day, when he saw in a vision evidently an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying, “Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” The ninth hour, or three o’clock in the afternoon, was one of the hours of prayer among the

Jews, and the observation of it by Cornelius shows, that he must have been instructed in their religion. At this hour it was, that a new and unexpected guest entered his apartment. A spirit from the regions of the blessed came down and visited him. Glorious was his appearance, and his garments were of the colour of the light.—“A man in bright clothing (says he) stood before me.” The message which this divine visitant brought, was one full of grace and comfort; cheering and refreshing as the dew of heaven, when it falls upon the grass of the field.—“Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” Such are the blessings which attend the pious and charitable man.—“God is not unrighteous, that he should forget his work and labour of love.” His good deeds are done upon earth, but, like a cloud of incense from the holy altar, they ascend to heaven, and rise in sweet remembrance before the throne. We do not indeed expect angels from above to assure us of this. We should be unreasonable if we did; for the word of God speaks to our faith, as plainly as the angel did to Cornelius; it cries aloud to every true penitent, and sincere believer, “Thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” And he who, like Cornelius “giveth much alms to the people, and prayeth to God alway,” at the appointed seasons, will find a joy and comfort in so doing, which may answer the same purpose with the appearance and message of the angel.

7. But the angel has something more to say to Cornelius —“And now, send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.” Two questions may here be asked. First, How could Cornelius please God, not having faith in Christ? Secondly, If he pleased God, without faith in Christ, what more could he do, with it? A short state of the case will afford us a satisfactory answer to both these questions. That Cornelius had faith in the true God, the God of Israel, appears from the manner in which he worshipped, and from the whole conduct of his life. This faith he must have received from the Jews, and from their scriptures. By them it is more than probable that he had been made acquainted with God’s merciful intention of redeeming mankind by a Saviour, who was to come. Nor is it possible to suppose, that he should have lived any time in Judea, without having heard the common



reports concerning Jesus of Nazareth, his wonderful works, his death, and resurrection. Nay, St. Peter, addressing himself to Cornelius and his friends, says, "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, that word, I say, *ye know*, which was published throughout all Judea," &c. But whether Jesus were indeed the person foretold, the Messiah in whom he must believe, and on whom he must rely for salvation, of this point Cornelius, like many of the Jews themselves, might be ignorant, or doubtful; the gospel not having been yet preached to him by any of the apostles. He was therefore ordered to send for St. Peter, who would inform and convince him of so important a truth. The gospel was necessary for Cornelius, in the same manner that it was necessary for the whole Jewish church. They believed in the Messiah to come; it was necessary they should acknowledge him, when he did come; otherwise, their belief would have become unbelief, as unhappily was the case with the greater part of that nation, who were accordingly punished and destroyed, as unbelievers. Had Cornelius rejected the gospel when preached, and opposed Christ when made known to him, he would have been in the same case with them. From that moment, he had commenced an enemy to God, because an enemy to his Son; and, therefore, God would have been an enemy to him. But far different were his tempers and dispositions, resembling those of the believing Jews, who, like old Simeon, only waited for the manifestation of the Saviour, ready to embrace him as soon as he appeared. The talent committed to him he had improved to the utmost; the knowledge obtained had been reduced to practice; and "to him that hath shall be given." So the angel directed him to the apostle, and the apostle to Christ. The angel did not himself convert and baptize Cornelius; for the dispensation of the gospel was committed not to angels, but to men; and all things must be done "in order," as God has thought proper to appoint in the church.—"Send for Simon, whose surname is Peter; HE shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." An angel may come from heaven, but he will send us to an *apostle* for instruction.

8. An opportunity of being instructed in his duty, of being told *what he ought to do*, was not, in the opinion of Cornelius, to be lost, or hazarded. He "made haste, and

prolonged not the time." No sooner had the heavenly visitor left him, but "he called two of his servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;" for such he chose to wait on him, having adopted David's rule, in the establishment of his household—"Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way shall serve me." To these intelligent and well disposed domestics he related all that had happened, and despatched them forthwith to Joppa. Happy the master, who hath such servants! Happy the servants, who have such a master! Happy he who sends, and they who are sent upon such an employment!

9. The admission of the Gentiles into the church of God, to enjoy its privileges, and share its blessings, was a doctrine against which all the passions in the breast of a Jew were armed, notwithstanding the many clear and evident predictions in its favour. The Israelitish church (as churches and sects are but too apt to do) had fondly arrogated to itself an exclusive right to the divine promises, forgetting to reflect, that those promises were not absolute, but conditional; that they were not made to the persons of men, but to their faith; so that, when a Jew ceased to believe, he would cease to be an heir of the promises; and when a Gentile began to believe, he would immediately begin to be so. There was a time, when no such distinction existed, as that of Jew and Gentile, but the descendants of Noah were upon an equal foot of favour and acceptance. The apostacy of the nations to idolatry occasioned the distinction, and therefore an unprejudiced mind must have perceived at once, that their repentance and reformation would, in course, abolish it again. The father only waited the return of the prodigal, to readmit him into his family. In the mean time, the children of Abraham were selected to preserve the truth, and faith in that truth, because they were the believing children of a believing parent. The light, which otherwise must have been extinguished, was placed in that candlestick; but it was placed there, to give light to all, who should, at any time, come into the house. Never, surely, was there a dispensation more wise, or more gracious! But it offended the Jews, as opposing their family and national prejudices, which were not without some difficulty effaced from the minds of the apostles themselves; insomuch that, while the messen-

gers of Cornelius were upon the road, it was judged necessary to prepare St. Peter for their arrival, by a figurative and scenical representation, and that thrice repeated, of the great change which was about to take place in the world, by the conversion of the Gentiles, and their adoption into the family of the faithful. For this purpose, while engaged at his devotion, he was cast into a trance—"He saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him—Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common, or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time—What God hath cleansed that call not thou common." This vision is evidently formed upon the legal distinction of clean and unclean creatures, which are here made to represent, as probably they were always intended to do, by their different properties and qualities, the corresponding different tempers and dispositions of good and bad men, believers and unbelievers, Jews and Gentiles; so that by the union of clean and unclean in the mystical sheet, which contained *all manner* of creatures, was denoted the purification of the Gentiles by faith, who were once unclean, and their junction with the believing Jews, in the Christian, or universal church. The purport of the vision, thrown into prophetic language, would run thus:—"The *wolf* shall dwell with the *lamb*, and the *leopard* shall lie down with the *kid*, and the *calf* and the *young lion* and the *fatling* together: the *cow* and the *bear* shall feed, and their young ones shall lie down together; and the *lion* shall eat straw like the *ox*. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the *asp*, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the *cockatrice*' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord*, as the waters cover the sea. In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; *to it shall the Gentiles seek*." The arrival of those who were sent from Cornelius, and the injunction of the Spirit, "Arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting, for I have sent them," fully satisfied Peter, as to the intention of the heavenly vision; and, in

his own mind, he readily applied to Jew and Gentile, what he had seen and heard concerning the clean and unclean animals.

10. Cornelius, in the mean time, impatiently waited the return of his faithful messengers; and, with a truly open and liberal spirit, desirous that others should partake of the good which heaven had sent him, he “had called together his kinsfolk and near friends,” that they likewise might hear the word of life; as knowing, it is with the grace of God as with the light of heaven, of which no man has the less, because a million of his brethren enjoy it as well as he. There is enough for all the world, and every individual has as much as he is capable of receiving.

11. As Cornelius had been ordered by an angel from heaven to send for Peter, it was natural for him to regard the apostle in the highest light; and therefore, when he had the happiness to behold him entering his doors, “he fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; for I myself also am a man”—one encompassed with the infirmities of mortality, like yourself; a fellow creature, whose duty it is to join with you in the worship of him, to whom alone worship is due. This is one part of St. Peter’s conduct, among many, which his pretended successors in the see of Rome, have not been solicitous to imitate; or we should never have heard of the style, *Dominus Deus noster, Papa!*

12. By the opening of St. Peter’s address to Cornelius and his friends, it appears, that he understood the vision as we have above explained it.—“Ye know,” says he, “how that it is an unlawful thing for a man, that is a Jew, to keep company and come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me;” that is, plainly, by the creatures in the sheet, “that I should not call any *MAN common, or unclean.*” The creatures, therefore, represented *men*, and to mankind, as divided into Jews and Gentiles; St. Peter transferred the ideas suggested by the animals, distinguished into clean and unclean. He goes on to declare himself at length convinced, “that God is no respecter of persons, but in *every nation*, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him;” that is, the partition wall is broken down, and people of *every nation*, as well as the Jewish, are accepted, upon the same terms of faith and obedience, when-



ever, by God's grace, they come into them, as Cornelius did, and as the whole heathen world afterward did, upon the publication of the gospel.—“God is no respecter of persons;” he does not show favour to the Jews because they were the children of Abraham, if, by rejecting the gospel, they cease to believe and act like Abraham, which if the Gentiles, by receiving the gospel, do, they will be accounted children of Abraham, and heirs of the promises; “in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness,” which without faith it is impossible to do—“is accepted with him.”

13. After this introduction, St. Peter proceeds to confirm to his little audience the truth of that word, which they had heard concerning Jesus of Nazareth. He declares to them his unction with the Holy Ghost and with power; the works wrought by him for the deliverance of poor mankind from the yoke of the great oppressor; his death, resurrection, and appointment to be the judge of quick and dead; with the consentient testimony of all the prophets to the doctrine of remission of sins through faith in his name. While he preached these interesting and glorious truths, the Holy Ghost fell upon those who heard the word, and they were immediately baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

14. In this manner were the first fruits of the Gentiles consecrated to God; and thus was the gate opened, through which hath since passed that “great multitude, not to be numbered by man, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who stand continually before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” The same gate is still open, and blessed is he who desireth and striveth to enter in thereat. In order to which, when he hath considered the example of Cornelius, we have only to add—“Go, and do thou likewise.”

## DISCOURSE L.

THE PROVIDENTIAL DELIVERANCE FROM THE GUNPOWDER TREASON.

*They shall wisely consider of his doing.*—Ps. lxiv. 9.

THE psalm, from whence these words are taken, is one of the *proper* psalms appointed to be used upon this day; and well suited indeed it is to the occasion. A king in danger of being cut off by the secret contrivances of his malignant adversaries, prays to God, that his life may be “preserved from fear of the enemy;” speaks of the “*secret* counsel of the wicked;” of their “shooting in *secret*, laying snares *privily*, and saying, Who shall see them?” But he foretells that the Almighty, who surveys the darkest proceedings of the wicked, shall, in a moment when they least expect it, blast all their designs;—“God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded!” He intimates the manner—that their schemes should be discovered and *betrayed* by themselves;—“So shall they make their own tongue to fall upon themselves:” and then follows the effect that should be produced in the hearts of others by so awful an event, in the words of the text:—“And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing;” that is, men shall ascribe such deliverance to the providence of God watching over them; and it will be their wisdom so to consider it, as *HIS* doing, and not the work of man, or of human prudence, much less that of what we commonly style *fortune*, or *chance*.

It shall be the business of the following Discourse to point out—

I. The necessity there is of attention and *consideration*, to discover the hand of God, and the manner of its working, in those events of which we are informed either by history, or our own experience.—“They shall *consider* of his doing.”

II. The *wisdom* of thus considering—"They shall *wisely* consider of his doing."

III. Certain marks whereby we may at any time discern an especial Providence; applying them, as we pass, to the transactions of this day.

I. Consideration, and indeed no small degree of it, is necessary to discern the hand of God, and the manner of its working, in the affairs of men. Many there are who, for want of this consideration, have no apprehension at all of it, nor are affected with it. They are either too busy, or too idle, to attend to the history of Providence, and the marvellous things which God has wrought, and is now working in the world. Of some the prophet says, "The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands:" that is, their minds are so sunk and lost in pleasures and diversions, as never to observe the remarkable occurrences of Providence.

Others see what passes, and, like the brute creatures, gaze awhile at it, and turn away, making no careful reflection, or inquiry into causes and effects.—"A brutish man," saith David, "knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this." On one occasion, he acknowledgeth himself to have been in this state;—"So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee."

Others there are, who pretend to consider, and inquire freely, but all the wrong way. Instead of discerning and adoring the hand of God, they labour to deny, and shut it quite out, ascribing all that happens to human politics, or the working of men only.—"How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? The Lord doth not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard." Such have been in all ages; and such (the more is the pity!) abound among the historians and *philosophers* (as they call themselves) of our own; who spare no time nor pains in attempting to exclude God from any inspection or influence upon our affairs. Accordingly—

Some have been either so perverse, or so profane, that they would not "read Providence (as a learned writer well expresses it) in the fairest print." "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up," and that ever so high, in the most stupendous miracles, "they will not see:" such as those, of whom it is

said, in the psalm, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt:" such as those, who, when they had seen the earth swallowing up Korah and his company, and the fire from the Lord consuming the men that offered incense; yet presently after charged Moses and Aaron with having "slain the people of the Lord:" or such as those in the gospel, who, though Christ had "done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not."

Wonder not, therefore, after this, if many do not discern the hand of God, when it is not lifted up so high, or extended so far, in miraculous acts; when, as in what we call the ordinary course of things, so many different plans are carrying on, so many instruments are employed; so many and so various ends are to be answered; so intricate must be the complication and entanglement of events, in a series of them reaching from the beginning to the end of the world; and so many of those events cannot be cleared up, and made to appear in their proper and full light, till that end shall come. On all these accounts, the special providence of God is seldom so evident, as that, without great attention and consideration, we can perceive and trace it. It may have been also judged expedient that many occurrences should be puzzling to us, to quash our presumption, to exercise our faith, to quicken our industry, and to find us employment. Our understanding was not given us to be idle upon such occasions, and it is our true wisdom so to use it; which was the—

II<sup>d</sup>. Point to be proved; "they *wisely* consider HIS doing."

He is not a man of sense, who denies either the being, or the providence of God; there is no wisdom in atheism; it is "the fool," who "says in his heart, there is no God." And surely, to imagine that he who made the world should take no care of the world which he hath made, but, as it were, forgetting that he had made it, should deliver it up to chance and fate, is an opinion equally foolish with the other. There are some who well know, that if there be a God, and if he observes and takes cognizance of human affairs, he must one day punish them for their villanies and their blasphemies. Therefore they endeavour to persuade themselves there is neither a providence nor a God. Through the corruptions of their hearts, and being given over to a reprobate mind,



they are so unfortunate as to succeed in their endeavours; and by such as they can seduce to a like degree of desperate wickedness, they may be accounted wise men. But he who dwelleth in heaven beholds their devices, and laughs them to scorn. He knows a day is coming, when his vengeance will cause them to feel the truths, which no evidence would induce them to believe. The greatest and best persons in all ages have believed in "a God who governed the world;" and wherein can the wisdom of man consist, but in observing and studying the works and dispensations of that God, from the beginning to this day? For grandeur, pleasure, and advantage, what subject can compare with this? And how senseless is the man, who passes his life without attending to them! By his mercies and by his judgments doth our God continually speak to us, and signify his mind, and show forth the glories of his kingdom, for which we are evermore bound to praise him. But how can we praise him as we ought; or, indeed, at all, if we know not what those mercies, and those judgments, and those glories are?—"The works of the Lord are great, sought out," studied and traced, "by all them that have pleasure therein." "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord. Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord, who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand. But whoso is wise, shall understand these things; prudent, and he shall know them;" such will know, that "he whose name is Jehovah, is the Most High over all the world; they will say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth."

Diligently to mark, and carefully to treasure up in our minds, the special providences of the Almighty, is the way to preserve and nourish our faith and hope in him; it furnishes the grounds of our thankfulness and praise; it stirs up our finest feelings and very best affections toward him; holy joy, humble reverence, and hearty love; it supports us under all our sufferings; and affords us comfort in all our sorrows. When adversity presses hard upon a man: when he is stripped of his possessions, and threatened with torture; when enemies persecute, and friends betray or forsake; or when pain and sickness harass him upon his bed, and sleep departs

from his eyelids—Gracious Lord, what shall become of him, if, at such an hour, a writer shall inform him there is no help for him in his God; that there is neither Redeemer, nor Creator; that the universe is the sport of contending demons, a scene of ravage and desolation; and, instead of being “full of the loving-kindness of the Lord,” is peopled only with fiends and furies? What sort of a being must the writer be, who could give such a representation of things; and what does he deserve at the hands of mankind? Before guilt of this infernal die, that of cheating and thieving, of perjury, robbery, and murder, melts away, and vanishes into nothing.

On the other hand, and by way of contrast, look into that collection of divine hymns, which have been recited in the church, to the unspeakable instruction and consolation of the faithful from age to age. I mean, as you well know, the book of Psalms. See there, how the people of God, whenever any calamity befell them, either as a nation, or as individuals, sustained, comforted, and cheered themselves and each other, by recollecting and meditating upon the works of the Lord, which he had wrought in old time for their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the children of Israel, his servants; the miracles in Egypt, the wonders in the field of Zoan; the division of the waters at the Red Sea, and again at the river Jordan; the fall of Jericho, the discomfiture of Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, and the overthrow of all the idolatrous kingdoms of Canaan. While they were employed in chanting forth the praises of their God, for the special providences formerly vouchsafed them, their minds were comforted, their spirits were raised, their hearts were warmed, their faith was revived and invigorated; it grew strong, and mighty; and they no longer supposed it possible, whatever their present sufferings might be, that he who had so often made bare his holy arm in their cause, could “ever leave them, or forsake them.”

The use which they made of the mercies vouchsafed to them in old time should we make of the special providences vouchsafed to us, in the deliverance and preservation of our own church and nation, from the various schemes concerted for the destruction of both. Among the first of these may be justly reckoned the deliverance this day commemorated, as will sufficiently appear, if we consider—

III. The marks and tokens visibly impressed upon it, how *strange*, and how *important* it was.

The scriptures relate many events of a *strange* kind; that is, strange, compared with the ordinary course of things, or the natural influence of causes, when the means are disproportionate, unsuitable, nay, seem even contrary to the effect. Such events speak God to be their cause, by his invisible power supplying apparent defects in the means. In the scripture histories, we are, as it were, admitted behind the scenes, and informed that the hand of God was more immediately concerned. Thus the stars in their courses fought against Sisera; the Lord thundered upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; he made the host of Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and horses, and a great host: he made the children of Ammon and Moab to destroy one another: he smote in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 men: under his direction one chases a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight: a stripling, with nothing more than a sling and a pebble, destroys a mighty giant, armed from head to foot; the cunning schemes of worldly and treacherous politicians, such as Abimelech, Achitophel, and many others, are suddenly baffled and blasted, and the mischief intended falls upon the heads of those who intended it; plots, with all possible caution and secrecy, contrived in darkness, are by improbable means, and unaccountable accidents, disclosed and brought to light; "a bird of the air (as the Wise Man speaks) telling the matter;" or, "the stones in the wall (as it is in the prophet) crying out," treason! In the book of Esther we read, that the king cannot sleep: to divert him, the chronicle is called for; Mordecai's service is pitched upon, and inquiry made concerning his recompense; honour is decreed him; so the cruel device of Haman, to destroy the Jews, comes out; and he himself is hanged on the gallows, which he had erected for Mordecai.

Thus, in the desperate wickedness of this day, the plot was laid, deep and dark; the implements of destruction prepared, and all ready, when the heart of one of the conspirators relents toward a friend, who must have been involved in the common ruin: a letter is sent to warn him; in that letter the nature of the destruction is alluded to; the letter is carried to the king, who conjectures the meaning; a search is made, and the villain seized upon the spot: who

declared, that if he had been advanced a few steps farther, he would have set fire to the train, and sacrificed himself, rather than the design should have failed.

Occurrences, like these, containing in them somewhat, though not strictly miraculous, yet truly admirable, turning out of the ordinary stream of human affairs, as miracles surmount the course of nature, most reasonably may, most justly should be ascribed to the special operation of him, "who only doth wondrous things; who breaketh the arm of the wicked, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty; who disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise; who is known by the judgment that he executeth, when the wicked is snared by the work of his own hand."

This may be farther evinced from the *importance* of the deliverance.

To entitle every little trifling thing that happens to a special providence, would be levity: to father upon the Almighty the mischiefs issuing from our own sin and folly, would be something worse: but, to ascribe every grand and beneficial event to his good hand, has ever been reputed wisdom and justice. It was a prevailing opinion even amongst the heathen, that whatever did bring great benefit to mankind, was not effected without divine goodness toward men.\* We know, indeed, that God doth not disregard any thing, but watches over *all* by his general and ordinary providence. He thereby "clothes the grass of the field; he provideth for the raven his food, and the young lions seek their meat from him;" without his care "a sparrow does not fall to the ground;" and by it "the hairs of our heads are all numbered." But the hand of his more special providence is chiefly employed in managing affairs of moment and consequence to us; such as great counsels and undertakings; revolutions and changes of state; war and peace; victory and good success; the protection of princes, and preservation of his people. When, therefore, any remarkable event, highly conducing to the public good of church and state, doth manifest itself, the accomplishment of it should be attributed to God's own hand. When any pernicious enterprise, levelled against the safety of prince and people, is disappointed and brought to nought, surely,

\* Balbus, in Cic. de Naturâ Deorum, lib. ii.



it is fit we should profess and say, "The righteous Lord hath hewn the snares of the ungodly in pieces."

And if the preservation of the king and royal family, with the three estates in parliament assembled;\* if the freeing our country from civil disorder and confusion of the worst kind; from the yoke of usurpation and slavery; from the most grievous extortion and rapine; from bloody persecutions and trials; if the upholding from utter ruin our church, which was so happily settled, and had so long flourished; if the securing our profession of God's holy truth and faith, with a pure worship, an edifying administration of his word and sacraments, with a comely, wholesome and moderate discipline, if being rescued from impious errors, scandalous practices, and superstitious rites, with merciless violence forced upon us; if a continuance of the most desirable comforts and conveniences of our lives; if all these are benefits, then was the deliverance of this day one of the most beneficial and most important, that ever was granted by heaven to any nation. And notwithstanding the obscurity, or intricacy, that may sometimes appear in the course of providence; notwithstanding any general exceptions, that may, by perverse incredulity, be alleged against the conduct of things here below; there are marks very observable, and this event is full of them, whereby, if we consider wisely, with due attention, diligence, and impartiality, we may discern and understand that it was "the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

For these, and all other benefits which have been in old time conferred, and often since preserved, and handed down to us of the present generation, let us rejoice, and be glad, and give honour to him who hath so conferred, and so preserved them. And let our affections and our lives harmonize with our voices, when we say—

"Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us over for a prey unto their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we are delivered.

\* Such is the language of the Rubrick in the form of service for this day: whence it must occur to the reader, that the doctrine which makes the *king* one of the three estates of parliament, is an *innovation*, introduced by republican writers; who diminish the *crown* to raise *the people*, and in the end to overturn the government.

“Allelujah! Salvation, and glory, and power unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments.

“Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who only dost wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.”

## DISCOURSE LI.

GOD THE PRESERVER OF PRINCES.

*It is He that giveth salvation unto kings.—Psalm cxliv. 10.*

It was a fine eulogium passed at once on the head and heart of the greatest of commanders by the most celebrated of orators, that *injuries* were the only things he was capable of *forgetting*. The generality of mankind are liable, alas! to be reproached with a conduct of a very different nature. They remember most things better than benefits; those, especially, which have been conferred upon them by their heavenly Father and Friend.—“Praise the Lord, O my soul,” says David elsewhere, “and forget not all his benefits.” A propensity to forget is evidently implied by this warm and spirited exhortation not to do so. Thoroughly sensible of such a propensity in human nature, the best writers on the practical and devotional part of religion have prescribed the use of a diary, in which the many mercies and deliverances we from time to time experience, may be regularly entered; that so, by recurring frequently to such a register, the traces of them, in danger otherwise of being obliterated by the cares and pleasures of life, may be refreshed and renewed in our minds.

If the case be so bad with individuals in this respect, there is no reason to suppose it better with communities:

where, the benefit being shared by so many, each is apt to consider his own portion of it as small, and scarcely worth notice; where that, which should be done by every body, is often done by nobody; and where the guilt of ingratitude, like the value of the benefit, by being divided, seems, in the conscience of every single member, to be diminished, and, as it were, brought to nothing. The astonishing instances of *forgetfulness* among the ancient people of God, recorded and reprov'd, for our admonition, in the scriptures of truth, will occur to your minds; and parallel instances, among Christians, notwithstanding such admonition, will present themselves to him, who is disposed to behold them.

The preceding observations are intended to justify the wisdom of our ancestors, in appointing these annual commemorations of blessings, thus for ever registered in our national diary, that they may not be neglected and forgotten. Nor let us by any means grow weary of celebrating them; but, even to the years of many generations, still continue, with thankful hearts, to exclaim—"We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what thou hast done in their days, and in the old time before them!" For though the mercy be old, the remembrance of it should be for ever young—renewed in our minds, from year to year, and from age to age; while the fathers to the children make known the loving-kindness of the Lord, and speak good of his name, by contemplating afresh the doctrine of the day, and the fact in which it is exemplified. The former of these is contained in the words of the text, which, when opened and illustrated, will prepare the way for a display of the latter—"I will sing a new song unto thee, O God; upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee, who givest salvation unto kings."

It is the high prerogative of the Almighty to give salvation, to preserve and deliver.—"I, even I, am the Lord, and beside me there is no Saviour." The divine mercy, like the spacious vault of heaven, extends to all, and comprehends within its fostering bosom the whole creation of God. "Thou, Lord, wilt save both man and beast." But its chief object is man, the lord of this lower world; so that still, comparatively, we may ask, with the apostle—"Doth God take care for oxen; or saith he it not rather for our sakes?" And, for this reason, Job cries out, emphatically, "I have

sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of MEN?"

He, who is the preserver of men, above other creatures, is also the preserver of kings, above other men. This point was acknowledged among the heathen, whose leaders are always represented, by the most ancient of their poets, as acting under the immediate guidance and protection of their respective tutelary deities. But we have a more sure word—"Great deliverance giveth he to his King; he is the saving health of his anointed; he is wonderful among the kings of the earth; he giveth salvation unto kings."

Let us inquire into the *reasons* why God is pleased thus to manifest an especial favour to those who bear rule in the kingdoms of men.

As medicine supposes disease, deliverance must imply danger. From troubles and perils no station is exempt.—“Great travail is created for every man, and an heavy yoke is upon the sons of Adam; from him that sitteth on a throne of glory, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes.” But this is not all. Great men not only share with others the calamities of life, but their share is in proportion to their greatness. Of what materials are the annals of history composed, but the continual perils and misfortunes of princes? When the storm arises, the loftiest cedars first and chiefly feel its force; and, therefore, *they* need an extraordinary degree of strength and support. God is mighty to save kings, because there is one mighty to destroy them, and whose interest it is to do so. By government vigorously administered, order is maintained in the world; then piety and virtue take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards; then the kingdom of heaven is established, and extends itself upon earth. But when there is “no king in Israel,” and each man may do, unpunished, “that which seems right in his own eyes,” an entrance is ministered for every thing ungodly and immoral; for every species of violence, and of folly; and the empire of Satan prevails. What wonder, then, that *he* should be the spirit, which worketh in the children of disobedience, exciting tumults and rebellions, delighting in the noise of these waves, and the madness of the people; and giving it in charge, like the Syrian of old, to his captains,—“Fight neither with small nor great, save only against the king?” And what wonder,



again, if this be the case, that God should interpose, to save and deliver those who are thus powerfully and unequally assailed? Verily, he would do it, for this reason alone, since it is his glory to resist the proud, and to put down the mighty from their seats.

But there is another reason. Kings, while employed in the due and faithful execution of their office, have a peculiar claim to his favour and protection; because they are, as the apostle speaks, his ministers, his servants, his delegates and representatives upon earth, attending continually, as such, upon this very thing. And even among men, every superior thinks himself obliged to defend, and vindicate from contempt and insult, those who are acting under him, and by virtue of his commission. Shall not, therefore, the Judge of all the world do right? The honour of the ambassador is the honour of the prince who sends him; and we know who it is that saith, "By ME kings reign." On this account, he hath so often made bare his holy arm in the sight of the people, and hath "given salvation unto kings."

Nor is it for *their* sakes only that salvation is thus given to them. The felicity of a whole nation is involved in that of its governor. The salvation given to the head diffuses itself to the members of the body politic, to the very least and lowest of them. All feel the benefit of government, instituted for the good of all; and no government was ever so badly administered, as not to be a blessing, if compared with anarchy, which multiplies one tyrant into ten thousand. Society, which implies government, is the natural state of mankind; all are born under it; and it is happy for them that they are so; they could not otherwise be reared from infancy to manhood, or partake in security of any of those blessings, now poured in such profusion around us. Willingly or unwillingly, the people must be governed; and, whatever they may fancy to the contrary, by some or other they always were governed, and always will be governed. Their *well* being, nay, their very *being*, as a people, depends upon it. "Let supplication be made for kings, and for all that are in authority"—Why?—"That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty;" that we may be safe from harm, and have leisure to be good, and to do good. The Jews, even when captives in Babylon, were commanded to pray for the prosperity of their oppressor

and his city for the same reason, that "in its peace they might have peace." But the connexion between government and felicity is no where marked out in a more expressive and beautiful manner than in the verses of our psalm immediately following the text.—"Rid me, and deliver me," says the Israelitish monarch, "from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood." Wherefore does the king thus entreat to be delivered? Plainly, on account of the benefits that would be thence derived to the community, over which, by God's appointment, he presided—"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace: that our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets: that our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, or going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people, which," by the salvation given to their king, "is in such a case; yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord," that can give salvation to him.

Such, then, are the reasons of that especial favour, which divine Providence, in so many instances, hath shown toward the persons of princes; because of the danger they are continually in from the adversary; because of the relation they bear to him, with whose authority they are invested; and because in *their* safety and happiness consist those of the people under them.

And thus much for the doctrine contained in the text. The application to the deliverance this day commemorated will best be made by considering how great the salvation—how evidently the gift of God.

The salvation must be estimated by the destruction intended to have been wrought; and that was great indeed! great, beyond any parallel in the annals of mankind! Armies have met, and slaughtered each other in battle; kings have fallen in the field, they have been assassinated, they have been poisoned—one has been tried as a rebel against the *majesty of the people*, and executed, for *high treason*, before his own palace, by his own subjects! But a design to destroy the whole legislature, king, lords, and commons, at a single blast, and leave not a wreck behind—this certainly

was a master stroke of villainy, black as the materials with which it was to have been accomplished, dark as the place where those materials were deposited. Blessed be God, it miscarried! But who can paint, in their proper colours, the consequences that must have attended its success! An instantaneous and total dissolution of all government, introductory to such a scene as never was beheld, of broils and disorders, of usurpation and slavery; of extortion and rapine; of faction and fury; of superstition and ignorance; of persecutions, tortures, and massacres;—the whole kingdom a perfect *aceldama*, a field of blood, for generations to come, without measure, and without end. From all these, and other calamities (if others there are), worse than fancy can form, or fear itself conceive, was this our country saved by the discovery of the infernal machinations against it.

There is no occasion to particularize the circumstances of this discovery. They have been often recounted, and are well known. And when we reflect upon the unheard of iniquity of the plot, together with the confusion and misery intended to have been brought on a mighty nation, and happily prevented by such discovery, he must be very blind indeed, who does not perceive the finger of God in it; and thoroughly stupid and insensible, who does not, on that account, praise and magnify his holy name.

But there is a circumstance behind, which deserves consideration at all times, and more especially in the present. I mean, the *principle*, the *motive*, which gave birth to this diabolical design. For if you ask, why the governors of three kingdoms were to be thus cut off at one stroke, and dispersed to the four winds? the answer is, They were *heretics*—the church of Rome, in the plenitude of her power and pride, had so denominated them, and judged them not fit to live any longer upon the earth.

That so detestable a scheme should have entered into the heart of man, upon any pretence, is disgrace enough to human nature: but that it should be formed upon the pretence of *religion*—of the *Christian* religion—this is making *sin* to become indeed *exceeding sinful*! From the intended effects of the conspiracy our country was saved by the discovery of it, previously to its execution. But where is the balm to heal the *wounds*, which religion has thereby received, in the house of men pretending to be its best, nay,

its only true *friends*? The efforts of all its adversaries put together never effected one hundredth part of the mischief caused by the contests and dissensions, the wars and tumults, plots and assassinations, excited and carried on by such friends, under the notion of promoting its welfare and advancement in the world. He who reads the accounts of such proceedings feels his indignation rising not only against the men, but against the faith professed by the perpetrators of these enormities; and he is tempted to exclaim, as some have exclaimed—"If this be Christianity, let my soul rest with the *philosophers*." Fully sensible of this, the writers on the side of infidelity spare no pains in ransacking history for facts of this kind, which are continually presented to the reader with every circumstance of aggravation, either in the form of virulent invective, or the more dangerous one of sly and pointed irony, a method practised but too successfully by a late celebrated wit on the continent, and in the prosecution of which, the *historian of the Roman empire*, among ourselves, has condescended (alas, the more is the pity!) to play a second part to him.

To those who may be in danger of seduction by this very fallacious, though, at first sight, specious argument, we have a few things to offer; and this is the proper opportunity for offering them.

In the first place, then, we must earnestly exhort them, as they love the truth, and their own eternal salvation, to make the just and necessary distinction between the religion, and the persons professing that religion. Does the gospel teach any lessons of the kind we have been considering? Does it direct subjects to blow up their governors into the air, because of some supposed errors in their religious opinions? Certainly not. If those disciples were reprov'd, as strangers to its spirit, who desired to revenge an indignity shown to the person of their Saviour by fetching down fire from above, as little can disciples now be justified by it, in seeking, on any pretence, to stir up fire from beneath. Was Christianity at first propagated, or did it direct itself ever after to be propagated, by *doing violence to any man*? You know the contrary; you know, that all its precepts point quite another way. There is no need to weary you with citations; a moment's reflection is sufficient to convince and satisfy any person on this head. Let not Christianity there-



fore suffer in your opinion, through the vices and villanies of those who disgrace it; but endeavour, yourselves, to adorn it in all things; and be *astmished*, if you please, as an honest heathen historian professes himself to have been, that *wickedness* and *cruelty* should mark the actions of men, whose religion throughout inculcates only *righteousness* and *mercy*.

To lessen, however, in some measure, this astonishment, suffer us to remind you, in the second place, that nothing, after all, is more common, than for a good thing to be abused by bad men; and then the better the thing abused, the worse and the more abominable is the abuse of it. When Christianity, by the favour of the converted emperors, opened the way to wealth and power, it is natural to suppose, that sometimes men would embrace it, not for any affection borne to itself, but as the means of acquiring wealth and power; which, when so acquired, would be often misemployed, and religion become the object of those evil passions, which it should—and, if properly received, would—have mortified and subdued. This is human nature—these are the *offences*, which, in the present state of a fallen world, *must needs come*—there is no preventing them. But let us not argue from abuse against use. Let us scour off the rust, but preserve the metal. Religion came pure from the hands of God, but was adulterated in passing through those of men. To God, therefore, be the glory, to man the shame.

Lastly, and above all—When you find yourselves disposed to listen to the voice of the seducer, and to think unfavourably of Christianity, on account of the ill lives and base actions of those who profess it, or indeed on any other account, always be upon your guard, and suspect yourselves: examine diligently, whether, through the corruption of your own hearts and lives, you do not *seek occasion* against religion, and wish to escape from the holiness of its precepts, the rigour of its discipline, and the terror of its judgments, by denying its authenticity. We often see men so ready to reject the strongest reasons for it, and take up with the weakest against it, that it seems difficult to account for their conduct on any other principle.

This may suffice for the argument formed by unbelievers, to the disadvantage of the gospel, upon the transaction of the day, and others of a similar nature.

Respecting those of the Romish persuasion, something must be said. But it shall be said, not in the spirit of animosity and invective, but in that of Christian charity. We envy them not the indulgence they have lately experienced, and which they would probably have experienced sooner, had government deemed it consistent with the welfare and safety of the state. It is to be hoped, they have at length perceived their error, in endeavouring to propagate religion by sanguinary methods; and to win proselytes by fire and sword, by racks and gibbets. Were the union ever so desirable, the proposed method of effecting it would spoil all; it can make no man affect the church that adopts it: it tends, on the contrary, to inspire into him an aversion from all that is called *Christianity*; and has given great occasion, as we have seen, to the enemies of the Lord, to blaspheme. There is no natural connexion between the gospel of peace, and the sword, or the bayonet. A saying, indeed, of a zealot in former times has been reported, that “unarmed missionaries make few converts.” Yet were the apostles of our ever blessed Redeemer such missionaries, and they converted the world, at a time when the wit and the wisdom, the fashion and the power of it, were all in arms against them. To be converted to any opinion, or system, a man must be first well persuaded of the truth of such opinion, or system. But *gunpowder* is no instrument of persuasion. The tongue and the pen were intended for that purpose: and even by these the purpose is always most successfully effected, when they are employed with gentleness. Man, as has been well observed, like every other animal, is best tamed and managed by good usage; he does not love to be bullied and beaten into truth itself. If you are in possession of it, state it with every possible advantage. Let her appear in her native charms, that the world may admire and adore; let humility and meekness, faith and patience, attend upon her, and in her mouth be evermore the law of kindness. When your writings shall be thus new modelled, let your lives and actions be in perfect unison with them; let your behaviour engage the beholder to a consideration of your doctrine, and your doctrine reflect lustre on your behaviour. Then may we hope you will reform what in very deed ought long since to have been reformed in your communion, and render it such as we can conscientiously accede

to: such as becomes the simplicity and purity of the gospel of Christ our Saviour. Or, if this cannot be, we may at least live upon a foot of peace and security together (Judah no more troubling Ephraim, and Ephraim no more vexing Judah), without apprehension of plots, anathemas, and crusades. Indeed, *their* day seems to be pretty well over, since we have lived to see the sovereign Pontiff, instead of launching the thunderbolts of the Vatican at the devoted head of a reforming emperor, taking a long and painful journey to supplicate, and returning as he came—A spectacle entirely new! When a disposition appears in the rulers of any kingdom to abolish absurd and superstitious usages, the court of Rome has now nothing left for it, but with all possible expedition to issue an edict, most graciously *empowering* them so to do. Thus are the mighty fallen!—And still lower must they fall; for the day seems evidently approaching, when “the kings of the earth,” as they are styled, or the princes of the Romish communion, shall, by some mighty effort, emancipate themselves from the bondage in which they are holden, and destroy the power which they have so long contributed to support; unless that power will ingenuously purify itself from its corruptions, and begin a new era of primitive Christianity.

The church of Rome should have done this honestly and effectually, when its corruptions were first pointed out. It had then retained those branches, which, in default of such conduct, were broken off. Nor can there be—indeed, there ought not to be—any other method devised, or thought of, to graft them in again.

When a church really stands in need of reformation, it should always, in *prudence*, as well as duty, reform *itself*, to prevent the task from being undertaken by others, who, though they may entertain a very laudable *abhorrence of idols*, may not perhaps scruple, if a tempting opportunity should offer, to *commit sacrilege*: who, under cover of reforming abuses, may at length reform away Christianity itself; and, either through ignorance or malice, may “root up the wheat with the tares.”

As to ourselves—We celebrate on this day a twofold deliverance from the tyranny of Rome, vouchsafed at different and distant periods. Let us not give occasion to our adversaries in that quarter to say, as they sometimes have

had the effrontery to say, that Protestantism naturally leads the way to Socinianism and materialism, and, in short, to every thing that is opprobrious. Let us not be forward to believe, what some are so very forward to tell us, that the doctrines of the ever blessed Trinity in Unity, of the divinity of our Lord and Saviour, and of that “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, by him made for the sins of men,” proceeded from the *papal chair*, and constitute a part of *the grand apostacy*. In one word, let our studies and our writings, our lives and our conversation, join in making a plain and unequivocal declaration to the whole world, that, though we cease to be *papists*, we continue to be CHRISTIANS.

## DISCOURSE LII.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE MIND BY TROUBLES AND TRIALS.

*When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*—Job xxiii. 10.

THE afflictions of life, though often grievous enough in themselves, become much more so by that state of doubt and perplexity into which the mind of the sufferer is brought by them. He is at a loss to conceive, why so much wretchedness is his portion, and what the design of Providence can be in sending it. He is tempted to despair, as thinking God has forsaken him; or to impiety, as imagining there can be no God who governs the world in wisdom and righteousness.

Whenever we find ourselves led to such conclusions as these, we may be sure there is some error in the principles upon which we set out. We are in the dark with regard to some point, the knowledge of which would bring all right, and restore peace and comfort to our fluttering and disordered spirits.

In the case before us, a wrong notion of human life is at the bottom of those desponding and murmuring thoughts,



which arise in our hearts, on finding ourselves encompassed and oppressed by a larger share than ordinary of its cares and troubles. We look not forward as we ought to do; we confine our views to the state of things in this present world; we regard it as final, and then wonder why our condition should be worse than that of our neighbours, when we think ourselves much better than they; and perhaps we really are so.

When the matter is thus stated, difficulties will certainly thicken upon us apace; and indeed I know not how we shall ever be able to see our way through them. But let us only reflect for a moment, that this life is no more than a preparation for another; that we come into it in a fallen and corrupted nature; that we are to be purified, during our short continuance in it, to qualify us for perfect happiness, and endless glory, in the presence of God; that such purification must be effected by trials and temptations; and that trials and temptations necessarily suppose troubles and afflictions, without which they cannot be made—let but these few plain considerations take place in the mind, and, at the brightness before them, clouds and darkness shall disperse, doubts and difficulties shall vanish away, and the poor desponding sufferer, who was lately accustomed, like the possessed man in the gospel, to wander wild among the tombs, his imagination haunted with thoughts of death and desolation, may now be seen in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and listening to words like these:—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

I need not take up your time in proving at large, that this life is a state of trial. It appears sufficiently from the nature of man; from the declarations of God; from the history of his people in every age; and, above all, from the life and death of our Saviour Christ. We are all fully persuaded of this most important truth; but it may be of use to show, how this persuasion, if reduced to practice, may become a source of patience and consolation, enabling us to support.

with dignity and ease, the several inconveniences and tribulations, which are permitted to befall us here below.

In general, we sink under temptation, because we do not sufficiently accustom ourselves to expect, and are therefore unprepared to encounter it. But were this idea (which is undoubtedly the true idea of our state) firmly impressed upon our minds, and always ready at hand, we should then stand armed for the fight, and by divine assistance be enabled to overcome. In this war, as in others, the great point is, to guard against a surprise; and to take care, that whenever the enemy shall attack, he may find us ready to repel.

Of the temptations, or trials, to which we are subject, some proceed from without, and others from within.

The world endeavours, at one time, to seduce, at another, to terrify us from the performance of our duty.

In the arts of seduction it is skilful. Whatever may be a man's turn, or temper, there are objects fitted to lay hold of it. There is honour for the ambitious, wealth for the selfish, and pleasure for the gay. Unsuspicious of mischief, we are apt to close with proposals of this kind immediately, without considering the terms on which they are offered, or the consequences which may follow. Not so the Son of God, our great pattern and example. In the day of his temptation, "the kingdoms of the world," with their glories and their delights, were set before him. But he knew that it *was* the day of temptation, the hour of trial, on which all depended; he weighed the condition annexed; "if thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine;" he called to mind what was written, and discomfited the tempter at once:—"Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Thus, of old time, to the mind of the patriarch Joseph, when beset by a formidable temptation, the proper thought occurred:—"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And the offers of the king of Moab to Balaam were, at first, rejected, with this noble declaration:—"If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less, or more." Balaam found his integrity put to the test, and the question was, whether he would serve God or mammon.

When the world cannot seduce, it will persecute. The

example of him who standeth, is a reproof to those who are fallen, and who are determined to rise no more. So saying or so doing, thou reproachest us; and that we will not bear: say as we say, and do as we do, or expect our uttermost vengeance; we will sell you to the Ismaelites, or deliver you up to the Romans.

In the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, some persons are mentioned, of this decided inflexible disposition. "who through faith wrought righteousness," and never could be prevailed upon to change either their principles, or their practices. And now behold their situation—"They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword. they wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Poor, miserable, foolish creatures, below contempt! would the men of fashion perhaps exclaim. But what says the apostle, in the most wonderful parenthesis that ever was penned—"Of whom the world was not WORTHY."

When the first Christians, in compliance with the strict injunctions of their God and Saviour, refused to defile themselves with the equally senseless and impious idolatry of their heathen neighbours, and all the other abominations which composed its train, the alternative was, to expire in the most horrid tortures that evil men, instigated by evil spirits, could devise for the purpose. This was *their* day of trial; and, fiery as it was, "they sustained the burden and heat of it," without complaining. The cross, as they well knew, led to a crown: they took it up, and "bore it after Jesus."

Our trials (for ever blessed be God) are not so severe, but, still trials we have. If any man form a resolution steadily, through life, to profess the doctrines, and practise the duties of his religion, let not that man imagine, because the *world* is now called *Christian*, that he shall experience no opposition from it. They whose minds and affections are wholly given up to ambition, avarice, intemperance, and impurity, whatever they may style themselves, or be styled by others, are idolaters; they do, in effect, still worship the deities of ancient Greece and Rome; and from them the

true disciples of Christ will still suffer persecution; will be loaded with opprobrious names; will be driven from society, as not caring to run to the same excess of riot and libertinism; and will be prevented from making their way, as they might otherwise fairly and honourably do, in life. It is said to be almost impossible, at this time, for a young man of rank to succeed, unless he first enter his name, and commence a member of certain societies instituted for the purpose of *gaming*. At this shrine he may sacrifice his time, his rest, his estate, his temper, his conscience, the peace of his mind, and the health of his body. Costly oblations, and bitter pangs! It may be questioned, whether the sufferings of a primitive martyr would not constitute the more eligible lot of the two. The agonies could not be more acute, and they would be sooner over.

There is another source of trouble and uneasiness from without, though of a less important kind. It is that produced by the cross tempers, untoward dispositions, and other failings of those about us. These we sometimes, in a peevish hour, think to be more than human nature can bear. But the truth is, that our own tempers are not yet what they should be, and what these trials are intended to make them. It is forgotten that we ourselves have ill humours, and we are offended if our friends do not readily excuse and forgive them: yet we cannot excuse and forgive those of others. This is unreasonable and unjust; it is an inequality and roughness, which time and experience, by God's grace, must level and smooth; and we have reason to be thankful, if we are placed in a situation which may contribute to effect so good and necessary a work. The fine observation made by a great critic upon the behaviour of our first parents after their transgression, as described by Milton, well deserves to be remembered by us all.—“Discord begins in mutual frailty, and ought to cease in mutual forbearance.”\*

Thus much for the trials brought upon us by the world from without. There are others which have their origin from within, from the frame and constitution either of body or mind.

To have all relish for the pleasures of life taken from us at once; to be cast on the bed of sickness, and to be there confined for days, weeks, months—perhaps for years; this

\* Johnson's Life of Milton, p. 164. edit. Hawkins.



is a trial which, at a distance, wears a most tremendous aspect; and would cause the heart of the stoutest man to sink, who, in the midst of health and vigour, should receive undoubted intelligence, that it was soon to be his portion. But let not any person alarm and terrify himself with thoughts of this kind; for, besides that it is folly to anticipate evil, and suffer before the time, He who sends trials, sends strength to support his servants under them. It is wonderful to see how soon the temper is altered, and conforms itself to its situation; how the mighty are bowed down, and the haughty are humbled; with what meekness and patience a long series of weakness and pain is borne, till the sufferer "comes forth as gold," a vessel purified and polished, and every way fitted "for the Master's use," with this inscription upon it:—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

Another temptation is that from melancholy, or dejection of spirits, as we commonly style it; when the spirit, which sustains a man's other infirmities, is broken, and needeth itself to be sustained; when favourite studies and pursuits please no longer; when the whole creation seems changed, and appears—we know not why—dull and dreary; when the mind is ready to give up every thing, and sink into listlessness and despondency. He who finds himself in this situation, has no time to lose. When a skillful physician has been consulted, that it may be known how far the body is concerned, the mind is to be roused and goaded into action. Constant employment must be found for it, lest its powers be turned inward, to fret, and wear, and prey upon itself. In the use of these means, let prayer be continually offered to Him, who can bring light out of darkness, and make the sorrowful heart to sing for joy; with patience and resignation let the sufferer trust in the Lord, and stay himself upon his God.

The time would fail me to enumerate all the different temptations which arise in our minds. They are as many, and as various, as our different passions and propensities, each of which will, at times, strive for the mastery, and all of which are to be kept, with a strong and steady hand, in due subordination and obedience.

The subject shall be left upon your minds with the following admonition of a pious French writer:—

Include yourself within the compass of your own heart. If it be not large, it is deep; and you will there find exercise enough. You will never be able to sound it; it cannot be known but by him who tries the thoughts and the reins. But dive into the subject as deep as you can. Examine yourself; and the knowledge of that which passes there will be of more use to you than the knowledge of all that passes in the world. Concern not yourself with the wars and quarrels of public or private persons. Take cognizance of those contests which are between the flesh and the spirit; betwixt the law of the members and that of the understanding. Appease those differences. Teach the flesh to be in subjection. Replace reason on her throne, and give her piety for her counsellor. Tame your passions, and bring them under bondage. Put your little state in good order; govern wisely and holily that numerous people contained in your small dominions; that multitude of thoughts, opinions, and affections, which are in your heart; till all rebellion be subdued, and the kingdom of heaven established within you.\*

### DISCOURSE LIII.

THE HOLY GHOST A COMFORTER.

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*I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.—John xiv. 16.*

THE words present to us, in a little compass, what it is the design of the scripture to describe at large, namely, the sacred *Three* united in the work of man's redemption. Here is the Son interceding, the Father granting, and the Spirit coming, as upon this day, to form the church, and ever after to preserve and sanctify it.—“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

\* Jurieu's “Method of Christian Devotion,” Part III. chap. iii.

It is impossible to cast the subject into a better method, than that offered by the words themselves, as they stand in the text. They direct us to consider—

I. The prayer of Christ; “I will pray the Father.”

When we read of the Son praying, we may be induced to think, that the person praying must necessarily be inferior to the person to whom prayer is made. We shall reason, as the apostle elsewhere does:—“Without all doubt, the greater is entreated by the less.” It is God who is entreated; it is a man who entreats; “there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man,” who is a man. He is so; but it is “the man Christ Jesus;” it is a man, very differently circumstanced from all other men that ever were born, and far above them all: it is a man, to whom God was pleased to be united: God was in Christ; in him dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily; God manifest in the flesh; the divine word made flesh, and dwelling among us; as, to prefigure this great event in old time, Jehovah came down from heaven, and filled the holy temple, built for his reception.—“Destroy this *temple*,” says Christ, speaking of his body, “and I (as God—for God only could do so) will raise it again in three days.”

The truth is, they who differ from us, and oppose us, upon this great point, affirm Christ to be man, which we never deny; but they cannot, while allowing the scripture, disprove his being likewise God, which is what we affirm.—“God and man are one Christ,” as our church teaches us rightly to confess.

While therefore it is a man, who mediates, intercedes, and prays, it is this circumstance of his being a man, in whom God dwells, and to whom God is in an especial manner united, which gives to his mediation, his intercession, his prayer, that virtue and effect, that force and power, which otherwise they could not have; for what, I beseech you, is the prayer of a man, a mere man, however upright and pure, that it should prevail for the pardon of all other men, being sinners, and obtain for them from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit? And for this reason it is, that they who deny the doctrine of our Lord’s divinity, have been forced to deny also that of his priesthood and intercession.

If we look forward to the 15th chapter of St. John’s Gospel, ver. 26, we find the same person, who says, in the

words of the text, "I will pray the Father, and he shall send a Comforter"—we find him uttering these words—"The Comforter whom *I will send* from the Father." He therefore who, in one capacity, prays that the Comforter may be sent, in another is the person who sends him, being joined in authority and power with the Father.—"He and the Father are one." Many are the passages of this kind, which can be explained and reconciled on no other principle, but that adopted and maintained by the church, concerning the twofold nature of Christ. The Spirit is called, in some places, "the Spirit of the Father ;"\* in others, "the Spirit of the Son ;"† he proceedeth from both.

How pleasing, how comfortable a consideration is it, that we have an Intercessor on high ; through whose prayer to the Father, not only the good things of this world, redeemed from the curse by him who first created them, and made again salutary and holy, are granted to us anew ; but we receive also the great, the supreme, the unspeakable gift, the gift of the divine Spirit, one with the Father and the Son, blessed and glorified for evermore !

II. From the Son praying, let us, therefore, turn our thoughts to the Father granting :—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you." When a Son asks, a Father can give : the one is gracious to prevail, the other easy to be entreated. The request was not preferred in a cold and languid manner.—"He made supplication (as the apostle speaks) with strong crying and tears." And still louder was the voice of his blood from the earth, "speaking better things than that of Abel ;" the one crying for mercy, as the other did for vengeance.

III. The gift thus requested and obtained was that of a Comforter :—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you a Comforter."

With respect to the apostles, this was a gift eminently in season. Various, as we know, are the powers and favours of the Spirit, suited to the various wants of mankind. To those who are ignorant, he is the Spirit of knowledge ; to those who are perplexed with doubts and difficulties, he is the Spirit of truth ; to those polluted by sin, he is the Spirit of holiness. But the apostles, at the time when our Lord spoke these words, were in a state of melancholy ; sorrow

\* Matt. x. 12.

† Gal. iv. 6.



had filled their hearts ; comfort was that of which they stood in need : comfort was promised, and, as upon this day, a Comforter was sent. Grief chills the heart, and congeals the spirits : he descended therefore in fire, to warm and to expand : he descended in the form of *tongues*, bringing the word of consolation, that good word, which maketh glad the heart of man. The effect appeared accordingly ; for in such a manner was the sorrow of the apostles turned into joy, that when they preached the gospel to the people assembled from different countries, their adversaries said, “ These men are full of new wine.” But it was not the juice of the grape ; in that age, and in that country, none being accustomed, as St. Peter observed, to drink wine in a morning : — “ These men are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day,” or nine o’clock, for they began their reckoning from six. It was, therefore, wine (to use our Lord’s expression) which they had “ drank new in the kingdom of God ;” they were filled with the Holy Ghost, with spiritual comfort, spiritual joy, and exultation. Instead of fearing and flying from their enemies, as before, at the apprehension and crucifixion of their Master, they now boldly faced them, prepared to stand before rulers, to “ speak of God’s testimonies even before kings, without being ashamed.” They were no longer grieved or offended at the thought of suffering for the truth ; they rejoiced in tribulation of that sort, and conceived themselves to have acquired a new dignity, when “ counted *worthy* so to suffer.” Such was the mighty change wrought in their minds, through the power of “ the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.”

A change is wrought in the minds of Christians, through every age, by the power of the same divine Spirit.

On the ministers of the gospel he does not indeed confer, immediately and by miracle, the gift of divers languages ; but it is he who inclines them to learn languages, for the purpose of understanding the scriptures ; to apply themselves carefully and conscientiously to the studies and duties of their profession ; to preach with force and effect that word, which is in the hearts of men as fire, enlightening the dark, warming the cold, melting the hard, and purifying the defiled. It is he who “ gives them the tongue of the learned,” who both disposes and enables them “ to speak a word in season to him that is weary,” and stands in need of

consolation, till “ in the midst of the sorrows that are in his heart heavenly comforts refresh his soul.” Our commission is the same with that of our blessed Master, which he opened at Nazareth, in the words of Isaiah—“ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Sion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”

What a variety of sublime and beautiful expressions is here employed to show, that our gospel, as it proceeds from the Holy Ghost the Comforter, is, and must ever be, a gospel of comfort !

But to whom is it such ? To many it is not ; they find no comfort in it ; they hate and dread the sight or the thought of it. It is such only to the poor in spirit, to the meek, and to the mourners ; to those who have been made sensible of their fallen estate, and of the sins they have committed ; to those who, by true repentance, have cast out and put away their sins from them ; to these it is a cordial indeed : but a cordial can be of no service, it will be of much disservice, if administered (should any unskilfully administer it) when the habit is loaded with humours, and the stomach overwhelmed and oppressed by crudities. A cordial here is not the remedy immediately wanted : proper discipline must prepare the way for it.

The Spirit comforts, by *strengthening* ; as the word, in our language, intimates. He is the Spirit of power, might, and courage, which are conferred upon us, in our due degree and measure, as they were upon the apostles. When convinced of the truth, we are no longer afraid to confess, to defend, or to practise it before men, even the greatest men. We are not ashamed of being singular at any time in doing our duty, nor offended and grieved because we cannot have the approbation of those, whose approbation is not worth having ; since of what consequence to a wise man is the opinion of such, as he thinks and knows to be, in this par-

secular matter, not wise! *Tongues* were given to be employed in speech; and they should be employed (by the ministers of Christ more especially) with all freedom and boldness, in telling the people of their sins, calling them to repentance, and proclaiming to all the gospel of pardon and peace.

Such is the gift prayed for by the Son, and bestowed on the church by the Father:—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you a Comforter."

IV. He is styled, in the text, "*Another* Comforter." While Christ continued to be present in person with his disciples, *he* was their Comforter. But, as he had informed them, he was about to leave them; to ascend into that glory, from whence he descended; "the glory he had with the Father, before the world was." The church, therefore, would find herself in a melancholy, forlorn, and widowed state. "How can the children of the bridechamber fast," (or mourn), said he, "while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they mourn in those days." The days immediately following Christ's ascension, were to be days of darkness and sorrow, of great tribulation, and severe persecution, first from Jews, and then from Gentiles. The disciples must have sunk under a trial like this, the church must have failed in its very beginning, and the gospel have perished from among men, had it not been for the promise and the grant of another Comforter, or *advocate*, as the word also signifies.

It was expedient that Christ should go away; that he should go into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, and to be our advocate *there*, to answer the slanders and calumnies of the great accuser of the brethren, who accuseth them before the throne: that he should not only do this, but rescue and save us, even when the accusation was true.—"There is one that accuseth you (said Christ), even Moses." The law accuses and condemns us all, because we all have broken it, and are become guilty before God, as a Lawgiver and a Judge. But what saith mercy, by the gospel?—"Deliver the man, I have found a ransom." Christ was first our priest; he offered himself a sacrifice for our sins; and then went, with his own blood, into the holy places, to make atonement for those, as sinners, whose innocence, otherwise, as advocate, he could not defend. On

this foot he went, to reinstate us in the favour of God ; to take possession of heaven for us, as our surety and representative, “ the first-born among many brethren ;” to prepare a place for us against that great and joyful day, when he shall return in like manner as he went, to receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also.

In the mean time, while this was doing above, there was need of another advocate, or Comforter, below ; and he supplied the absence of his body, by the presence of his Spirit ; so that in all our troubles, under every possible calamity that can befall us, there is help at hand, both in heaven and on earth ; in heaven, Christ mediating ; on earth, the Spirit comforting. Of this latter it is said, that he also “ maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered ;” praying with us, and in us, “ bearing witness, with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” adopted sons, redeemed from the world, and evidenced to be so, by the testimony of a conscience purged from sin, through faith, and the spirit of holiness.—“ My conscience,” says the apostle, “ beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost ;” an expression which answers exactly to that other—“ The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

We come now to the last clause in my text ;—“ I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”

We may consider this as spoken by Christ of the Holy Spirit, in contradistinction to himself. I go away, but he shall abide. The enjoyment of good, when obtained, may be, and generally is, damped and diminished, by the apprehension of losing it again. The disciples found, that their blessed Master was about to be taken from them. They might fear the same, respecting this other Comforter, who was promised, lest he too should, after a while, forsake them. But this was not to happen. The Son vouchsafed to descend from heaven for a certain purpose, and for a certain time necessary to accomplish that purpose : then he returned back to his celestial mansion. Though the disciples had known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth they were to know him so no more. The office graciously sustained by the Spirit, in the scheme of man’s redemption, requires his constant abode and superintendence. Of the



perpetuity of his influence, we are therefore assured, “to our great and endless comfort.”

And herein it is, that heavenly comforts differ from earthly ones. These may be used for a time; but they perish with the using, and we must look for others. Riches make themselves wings; of a still more uncertain tenure are fame and honour; and pleasures are more fleeting than either. They flutter about us, for a little while, in the season of health and prosperity. But the day of sickness and trouble must come; and then, where are they, or what can they avail? Between us and the world the curtain will be soon drawn for ever; the things of the world can be of no farther concern or service. To the mind's eye will appear, above, the Judge in glory; below, the earth in flames. Pain will distract, conscience will accuse, and friends will forsake. The man of the world, looking round on those perishing idols, whom he has worshipped, and to whom he has sacrificed his eternal interests, will exclaim, in the anguish of despair—may no person here present ever know it but by description!—“Surely, miserable comforters are ye all!”

In such comforters, therefore, put not your trust, for they will undoubtedly fail you in time of need. They are winter brooks, overflowing when there is least occasion; but, in the burning heat of summer, the thirsty traveller, who has recourse to them, for the relief of his necessity, finds them dry. Nay, when they are with you, in their highest perfection, their insufficiency is ever experienced, though it may not be owned. No circle of pleasure is so complete, as not to leave a frightful void, to supply which, something of a far different and superior kind is required. This has been repeatedly, and in sorrow of heart, complained of, by persons possessing all that the world could give them, and finding nothing more of that sort to ask, or desire; yet has their existence become so wretched, that many of them have been tempted, and some prevailed upon, so far as lay in their power, to put a period to it; confessing themselves weary of treading the round of dissipation and insignificance, and willing rather to risk the torments of another world, than sustain the miseries of this, with all its enjoyments full blown before them.

Seek then for comforts, which never fatigue, or cloy; for comforts, which, like the manna bestowed on the church in

the wilderness, come down from heaven fresh every morning as they are wanted, suited to every taste, and satisfying every capacity. Seek for comforts, which abide for ever, attending you through sickness, pain, age, and death, to that land of promise, where the manna ceases to descend, only because you are admitted to the presence of him from whom it descended, and the streams become needless, when you can drink at the fountain.

## DISCOURSE LIV.

### GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

*Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*—Prov. iv. 23.

THE heart in the body is the well-spring of life. From thence the blood proceeds, and thither it returns. Purge the fountain, therefore, and the streams will flow pure.

When we treat of the mind, we use the same word, to denote that centre and source from which all our thoughts issue; as when we say, a man has a *good heart*, or a *bad heart*. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the hand acteth. He who never thinks any evil, will never speak any, or do any. Above all things, then, watch well your *thoughts*.—"Keep the heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Purge the fountain, and the streams will flow pure.

But is this possible? it will be asked—Thoughts are volatile things; they arise without, or against one's will; and you may as well tell us to imprison the wind, as to keep them in order, when they are risen. The task is *difficult*, but not *so* difficult. It is difficult; but the greater will be the glory of performing it. It has been done, and, there-

fore, may be done again. It is not impossible, for then it had never been commanded.—“Keep the heart *with all diligence* ;” do your best, and, by God’s grace, you will succeed.

The right government of the thoughts, to be sure, requires no small art, vigilance, and resolution. But it is a matter of such vast importance to the peace and improvement of the mind, that it is worth while to be at some pains about it. For a little consideration will show us, that our happiness or unhappiness depends generally upon our own thoughts. What happens without us does not produce either one or the other, but our thought and apprehension about it. The same kind of accident which deprives one person of his reason, will give little or no concern to another; nor can any affliction perhaps, befall the children of men, which some have not borne with cheerfulness and ease.

It will be readily allowed, that a man who has so numerous and turbulent a family to govern, which are too apt to be at the command of his passions and appetites, ought not to be long from home. If he be, they will soon grow mutinous and disorderly under the conduct of those two headstrong guides, and raise great clamours and disturbances, sometimes on very slight occasions indeed. And a more dreadful scene of misery can hardly be imagined, than that which is occasioned by such a tumult and uproar within; when a raging conscience, or inflamed passions are let loose, without check or control. A city in flames is but a faint emblem, or the mutiny of intoxicated mariners, who have murdered their commander, and are destroying one another. The torment of the mind, under such an insurrection and ravage, is not easy to be conceived. The most revengeful person in the world cannot wish his enemy a greater.

A wise heathen\* very justly observes, that a man is seldom rendered unhappy by his ignorance of the thoughts of others; but he that does not attend to the motions of his own, is certainly miserable. Yet look around you, and what do you behold? People ranging and roving all the world over, ransacking every thing, gazing at the stars above, digging into the bowels of the earth below, diving into other men’s

\* The Emperor Marcus Antoninus.

bosoms, never considering all the while, that the care of their own minds is neglected. He who spends so much of his time *abroad*, must expect to find strange doings when he comes *home*.

A very ingenious and sensible writer has observed, that the selection of our thoughts is of equal consequence with the choice of our company. Permit me to adopt his ideas as the ground-work of the following Discourse, adding withal such other reflections as have occurred in a course of meditation on the subject.

Let us consider our thoughts as so much company, and inquire, which of them one would wish to exclude and send away, which to let in and receive; because it is much easier to prevent disagreeable visitants from entering, than to get rid of them when they are entered. It will be a great matter, therefore, to have a trusty porter at the gate; to keep a good guard at the door by which bad thoughts come in, and to avoid those occasions which commonly excite them.

In the first place, then, it may be taken for granted, no one would choose to entertain guests that were *peevish* and *discontented* with every thing. Their room is certainly much better than their company. They are uneasy in themselves, and will soon make the whole house so; like wasps, that are not only restless, but will cause universal uneasiness, and sting the family. Watch, therefore, against all thoughts of this kind, which do but chafe and corrode the mind to no purpose. To harbour these is to do yourself more injury than it is in the power of your greatest enemy to do you. It is equally a Christian's *interest* and duty to "learn, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content."

There is another set of people, who are not the most comfortable companions in the world; such as are evermore *anxious* about what is to happen, *fearful* of every thing, and *apprehensive* of the worst. Open not the door to thoughts of this complexion; since, by giving way to tormenting fears and suspicions of some approaching danger, or troublesome event, you not only anticipate, but double the evil you fear; and undergo much more from the apprehension of it before it comes, than from the whole weight of it when present. Are not all these events under the direction of a wise and gracious Providence? If they befall you, they constitute



that share of suffering which God hath appointed you, and which he expects you should bear as a Christian. He who sends trials, will send strength. Your being miserable before hand will not keep them off, or enable you to bear them when they come. But suppose (as it often happens) they never come; then you have made yourself wretched, perhaps twenty years together, for nothing; and all would have been just as it is, if you had never had an uneasy thought about it. How often has your fear magnified evils at a distance, which you have found infinitely less in reality, than in appearance? Learn to trust God, and be at peace; "in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

You esteem it a dreadful thing to be obliged to live with persons who are *passionate* and *quarrelsome*. You undoubtedly judge right; it is like living in a house that is on fire. Dismiss, therefore, as soon as may be, all *angry* and *wrathful* thoughts. They canker the mind, and dispose it to the worst temper in the world, that of fixed malice and revenge. Never recall the ideas, or ruminate upon past injuries and provocations. This is the *amusement* of many in their solitary hours; but they might as well play with cannon-balls, or thunderbolts. They may work themselves up to distraction; to hate every thing, and every body; and to have the temper and disposition of the *destroyer* himself. Anger may *steal* into the heart of a wise man; but it *rests* only in the bosom of fools. Make the most candid allowances for the offender. Consider his natural temper. Turn your anger into pity. Regard him as ill of a very bad disposition. Think of the patience and meekness of Christ, and the petition in the Lord's Prayer; how much you stand in need of forgiveness yourself both from God and man; and how foolish it is to torment yourself, because he has behaved amiss. The apostle's precept in this case is, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." The Pythagoreans, a sect of heathen philosophers, are said to have practised it literally, who, if at any time in a passion they had broken out into abusive language, before sunset gave each other their hands, and with them a discharge from all injuries; and so, with a mutual reconciliation, parted friends. Above all things, be sure to set a guard on the tongue, while the angry mood is upon you. The least spark may break out into a conflagration, when cherished by a resentful heart, and fanned by the

wind of an angry breath. Aggravating expressions, at such a time, are like oil thrown upon the flames. In anger, as well as in a fever, it is good to have the tongue kept clean and smooth.

Whoever has been much conversant with the world must have often met with *silly*, *trifling*, and *unreasonable* people, who are to be found every where, and thrust themselves into all companies; who will talk for ever about nothing; and whose conversation, if you could enjoy it a month together, would neither instruct nor entertain you. How far preferable is solitude to such society! There are silly, trifling, and unreasonable *thoughts* as well as persons; such are always about, and if care be not taken, will get into the mind we know not how, and seize and possess it before we are aware; they will hold it in empty idle speculations, which yield it neither pleasure nor profit, and turn to no manner of account upon earth; only consume time, and prevent a better employment of the mind. And, indeed, there is little difference whether we spend the time in sleep, or in these waking dreams. Nay, if the thoughts which thus insensibly steal upon the mind be not altogether absurd and nonsensical, yet if they be impertinent and unseasonable, they ought to be dismissed, because they keep out better company.

There is something particularly tiresome in your projectors and castle-builders, who will detain you for hours with relations of their improbable and impracticable schemes, taking you off, as well as themselves, all the while, from the plain duties of common life; from doing your business, or enjoying your friends. One would never be *at home* to this sort of visitants. Give your porter, therefore, directions to be in a more especial manner upon his guard against all *wild* and *extravagant* thoughts, all *vain* and *fantastical* imaginations. Suffer not your mind to be taken up with thoughts of things that never were, and perhaps never will be; to seek after a visionary pleasure in the prospect of what you have not the least reason to hope, or a needless pain in the apprehension of what you have not the least reason to fear. It is unknown how much time is wasted by many persons in these airy and chimerical schemes; while they neglect their duty to God and man, and even their own worldly interest; thus losing the substance by grasping at the shadow, and dreaming themselves princes, till they awake

heggars. The truth is, next to a clear conscience and sound judgment, there is not a greater blessing than a regular and well governed imagination; to be able to view things as they are, in their true light, and proper colours; and to distinguish the false images that are painted on the fancy, from the representations of truth and reason. For how common a thing is it for men, before they are aware, to confound reason and fancy, truth and imagination together; to think they believe things true or false, when they only fancy them to be so; and fancy them to be so, because they would have them so; as some have told a story, knowing it to be false, till by degrees they have come to think it true.

There is one sort of guests, who are no strangers to the mind of man, of an Englishman, it is said, above others. These are *gloomy* and *melancholy* thoughts. There are times and seasons when to some every thing appears dismal and disconsolate, though they know not why. A black cloud hangs hovering over their minds; which, when it falls in showers through their eyes, is dispersed; and all is serene again. This is often purely mechanical; and owing either to some fault in the bodily constitution, or some accidental disorder in the animal frame. It comes on in a dark month, a thick sky, and an east wind; it may be owing in part to our situation as islanders, and in part to the grossness and heaviness of our diet, attended, as it frequently is among those of better condition, who are chiefly subject to this malady, with the want of a due degree of exercise and labour. In this case, the advice of an honest and skillful physician may be of eminent service. Constant employment and a cheerful friend are two excellent remedies. Certain however it is, that whatever means can be devised, they should instantly and incessantly be used, to drive away such dreary and desponding imaginations; for to admit and indulge them would be as if one was to quit the warm precincts of day, to take leave of life and the sun, and to pass one's time amidst the damps and darkness of a funeral vault. Our faculties, in such circumstances, would be benumbed, and we should soon become, ourselves, useless to all the purposes of our being, like the inhabitants of the tomb, who sleep in death.

It is needless to say, that we should repel all *impure* and *lascivious* thoughts, which taint and defile the mind, and which, though hidden from men, are known to God, in

whose eye they are abominable ; because if we possess a fair character, and frequent good company, it is to be hoped they will not have the assurance to knock at the door.

Lastly, with abhorrence reject immediately all *profane* and *blasphemous* thoughts, which are sometimes suddenly injected into the mind, we know not *how*, though we may give a pretty good guess from *whence* ; unless indeed they proceed from some bodily weakness and indisposition ; in which case, as in a former one, the assistance of the physician may be more necessary than that of the divine. When the body is disordered, the mind will be so too ; and thoughts will arise in it, of which no account can be given. But let those who are thus afflicted know, for their comfort, that bare thoughts will not be imputed to them for sins, while they do not cherish and encourage them, but, on the contrary, exert all their endeavours to expel and banish them ; which, with prayers for help from above, will not fail of success in the end.

These, then, are the thoughts, against which you should carefully guard : such as are peevish and discontented ; anxious and fearful ; passionate and quarrelsome ; silly and trifling ; vain and fantastical ; gloomy and melancholy ; impure and lascivious ; profane and blasphemous. A formidable band ! to whose importunity, more or less, every one is subject. Reason, aided and inspirited by the grace of God, must watch diligently at the gate, either to bar their entrance, or drive them out forthwith when entered, not only as impertinent, but mischievous intruders, that will otherwise for ever destroy the peace and quiet of the family.

The best method, after all, perhaps, is, to contrive matters so, as to be always *pre-engaged*, when they come ; engaged with better company : and then there will be no room for *them*. For other kind of thoughts there are, to which, when they stand at the door and knock, the porter should open immediately ; which you should let in and receive, retain and improve, to your soul's health and happiness.

The grand secret in this, as in many other cases, is *employment*. An empty house is every body's property. All the vagrants about the country will take up their quarters in it. Always therefore have something to do, and you will always have something to think of. God has placed every person in some station ; and every station has a set of duties



belonging to it. Did we not forget or neglect these, evil thoughts would sue for admission in vain. Indeed, they would not come near our dwelling, any more than idle, vain, profligate people would think of visiting and teasing a man who laboured constantly for his daily bread. If there be any one, who is of opinion, that his station does not find him employment, or that it privileges him to be idle, let him only suppose, for a moment, that when his soul shall quit his body, and appear before God, he be asked the two following questions—Whether he could not have done more good in the world? and, Why he did not?

But besides the duties we owe to others, there is a person very dear to every one of us, who claims no small share of attention and regard, I mean *self*. Each man's mind is a little estate, at his own door, which is to be brought into order, and kept in order. It is naturally a wilderness; it is to be converted into a garden. Weeds and thistles must be rooted up; flowers and fruits must be planted and cultivated. Evil tempers and dispositions must be dispossessed, and good ones introduced in their place. Husbandmen and gardeners, if they mind their business, have enough to think of. Who can say his mind is yet completely in that state, in which he wishes it to be? And even if it were, should his diligence be ever so little remitted, it would soon be out of that state again. He, therefore, who will receive and entertain all thoughts that tend to the improvement of his mind, needeth never complain of being without company.

For this purpose, Wisdom spreads her ample page before him; the book of universal knowledge lies open to his inspection; and he may enrich his understanding with the experience of ages and generations. The life of one man is like the life of another; and he cannot find himself in circumstances, in which his predecessors have not been before him, and his successors shall not be after him. Hence the proper use of *history*; and above all history, that which relates the *lives* of persons in stations similar to our own. But there is no knowledge which may not be turned to use by him, who reads with a faithful and honest intention of being the better for it, by applying all for his own correction and amendment. In the moral world, though not in the natural, there is a *philosopher's stone*, which transmutes all metals into gold. Of the present age it may certainly be said with

truth, that it is an age of science. The communication has been opened, by commerce, with all parts of the world. The prophet Daniel's prediction is fulfilled—"Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased." "*Wisdom crieth without,*" but folly has the louder voice, and prevents her from being heard as she should be. Move a little out of the noise of one, and the sound of the other will steal gently upon the ear. Through that she will take possession of the heart, and introduce visitants, of whom you need never to be ashamed.

The heart, however, is capacious; still there is room—And lo, a procession appears advancing toward us, which will fill up every part—led on by one, in whose air reigns native dignity, and in whose countenance majesty and meekness sit enthroned together; all the virtues unite their various lustres in her crown, around which spring the ever blooming flowers of paradise. We acknowledge at once the queen of heaven, fair RELIGION, with her lovely train; *faith*, ever musing on the holy book; *hope*, resting on her sure anchor, and bidding defiance to the tempests of life; *charity*, blessed with a numerous family around her, thinking no ill of any one, and doing good to every one; *repentance*, with gleams of comfort brightening a face of sorrow, like the sun shining through a watery cloud; *devotion*, with eyes fixed on heaven; *patience*, smiling at affliction; *peace*, carrying, on a golden sceptre, the dove and the olive branch; and *joy*, with an anthem-book, singing an hallelujah! Listen to the leader of this celestial band, and she will tell you all you can desire to know. She will carry you to the blissful bowers of Eden; she will inform you how they were lost, and how they are to be regained. She will point out the world's Redeemer, exhibited from the beginning in figure and prophecy, while the patriarchs saw his day at a distance, and the people of God were trained, by their schoolmaster, the law, to the expectation of him. She will show you how all events from the creation tended to this great end, and all the distinguished persons, who have appeared upon the stage, performed their parts in the universal drama, the empires of the world rising and falling in obedience to the appointment of Providence, for the execution of his counsels. At length, in the fulness of time, she will make known to you the appearance of the long desired Saviour; explain-

ing the reasons of his humble birth, and holy life ; of all he said, and all he did ; of his unspeakable sufferings ; his death and burial ; his triumphant resurrection, and glorious ascension. She will take you within the veil, and give you a sight of Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with honour and immortality, and receiving homage from the hosts of heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect. She will pass over the duration of time and the world, and place before your eyes the throne of judgment, and the unalterable sentence ; the glories of the righteous, and the miseries of the wicked. The thoughts suggested by this variety of interesting subjects, are thoughts which well deserve admittance ; and if you will please to admit them, we may venture to say, “ the house will be furnished with guests.”

Such guests you would wish to retain ; such thoughts to cherish and improve.

For this purpose, when you have started a good thought, pursue it ; do not presently lose sight of it, or suffer any trifling fancy, that may intervene, to divert you from it. Dismiss it not, till you have sifted it, and exhausted it, and well considered the different consequences and inferences that result from it. However, retain not the subject any longer than you find your thoughts run freely upon it ; for to confine them to it, when it is quite worn out, is to give them an unnatural bent, without sufficient employment ; which will make them flag, or be more apt to fly off to something else.

And to keep the mind intent on the subject you think of, you must be at some pains to recall and refix your desultory and rambling thoughts. Lay open the subject in as many lights and views as it is capable of being represented in. Clothe your best ideas in pertinent and well chosen words, deliberately pronounced, or commit them to writing. Accustom yourself to *speak* naturally and reasonably on all subjects, and you will soon learn to *think* so on the best ; especially, if you often converse with those persons who speak, and those authors who write, in that manner.

The sincerity of a true religious principle cannot be better known, than by the readiness with which the thoughts turn themselves to God, and the pleasure with which they are employed in devout exercises. And though a person may not always be so well pleased with hearing religious things

talked of by others, whose different taste, sentiments, or manner of expression, may have something disagreeable; yet, if he have no inclination to think about them himself, or to converse with himself about them, he has great reason to suspect, that his heart is not right with God. But, if he frequently and delightfully exercise his mind in divine contemplations, it will not only be a good mark of his sincerity, but will habitually dispose it for the reception of the best and most useful thoughts, and fit it for the noblest entertainments. For if bad thoughts are as infectious as bad company, good thoughts solace, instruct, and entertain the mind like good company. And this is one great advantage of retirement, that a man may choose what company he pleases from within himself.

But as in the world we oftener light into bad company than good, so likewise even in solitude we are oftener troubled with impertinent and unprofitable thoughts, than entertained with agreeable and useful ones. And a person who has so far lost the command of himself, as to lie at the mercy of every foolish or vexatious thought, is much in the same situation as a *host*, whose house is open to all *comers*; whom, though ever so noisy, rude, and troublesome, he cannot get rid of; but with this difference, that the *latter* hath some recompense for his trouble; the *former* none at all, but is robbed of his peace and quiet for nothing.

And let no one imagine, as too many are apt to do, that it is a matter of indifference what thoughts he entertains in his heart, since the reason of things concurs with the testimony of scripture to assure us, that "the thought of foolishness," when allowed by us, "is itself sin." Therefore, in the excellent words of an excellent poet,\*—

Guard well thy thoughts; our thoughts are heard in heaven.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

And thou, Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

\* Dr. Young.



## DISCOURSE LV.

LIFE A JOURNEY.

*I am a stranger in the earth.*—Ps. cxix. 19.

AND was it, then, peculiar to the son of Jesse, the sweet psalmist of Israel, to be so? No, surely; it is a character in which every son of Adam appears, and acts, upon the stage of life. We have all an home; but that home is in heaven. We are strangers in the earth; we are here in a foreign land, through which we travel to our native country, there to possess everlasting habitations. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, having, in the eleventh chapter, celebrated the Old Testament worthies, and the wonders which they wrought, through the divine principle that was in them, sums up the account in the following words:—"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly, that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned; but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Agreeably to this account, if we look into the story of those friends and favourites of heaven, the ancestors of the Israelitish nation, we find them sojourning in a land that was not theirs; dwelling only in tents, soon pitched, and as soon removed again; having no ground of their own to set their foot on, save only a possession of a burying place (and that purchased of the inhabitants), where they might rest from their travels, till they shall pass, at the resurrection of the just, to their durable inheritance, in the kingdom of God.

Such was Jacob's notion of human life, expressed in his

answer to the Egyptian monarch, who had inquired his age—“The days of the years of my pilgrimage,” says the patriarch, “are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage.”

Look at the posterity of Jacob, the chosen people of the Most High, after they had been delivered from the house of bondage. View them likewise dwelling in tents; sojourning, for forty years, in a vast and howling wilderness; attacked by enemies; stung by serpents; and in danger of perishing, for want of provisions; but still supported by the hand of Providence, and at length conducted to the land of promise. Consider, O Christian, this history, and in it behold thy pictured life!

When the children of Israel had taken possession of Canaan, they might be said in some sense to have obtained a settlement. But, in truth and propriety, what settlement can any man be said to have obtained, to whom will soon be brought (and he knows not how soon) the message which was brought to king Hezekiah—“Set thine house in order, for thou must die!” This was the case with the Israelites, no less after their settlement in the land of Canaan, than before it. Notwithstanding, therefore, the *rest* which God had there given them, you find David, in the 95th Psalm, speaking of another future and distant *rest*, still remaining for the people of God, in a better country, that is, an heavenly. And accordingly, though settled in the promised land, you hear him still crying out, in the words of the text—“I am a stranger in the earth.”

And what shall we say, with regard to the Son of God himself, when, for us and for our salvation, in the form of man, he honoured this world with his presence? Did not he pass through it, as a foreigner, returning to the celestial mansions, from whence he descended? Did not he live and act as such, and was he not treated as such by those to whom he came? Yes, verily, he was a stranger and a sojourner here below, as all his fathers, according to the flesh, were before him, and as all his children, according to the spirit, have been, and must be after him, upon the earth. The rule is a general one, and admits of no exception.

A consideration thus striking and affecting cannot be

without its use in the regulation of our manners : and I have somewhere read of a pious old man, who being desired by a young pupil and disciple to give him some one short precept, which might contain all religion in a little compass, and serve, at all times, and in all places, for the direction of his conduct through life, replied—"Only remember, that **you are a stranger in the earth.**"

Let us, therefore, take this for our ground, that life is a journey, and man a traveller; and let us inquire, what manner of persons, upon this principle, we ought to be.

And here it will immediately occur to us, in the first place, that wherever, in the course of his journey, a traveller may be, his heart is still at home. Nothing can detain his thoughts, for any long time together, from his country, his house, and his family, to which he is returning. The spirit of man is not a native of this lower world. It came originally from above; and, upon the dissolution of the body, will return to God who gave it, to its own proper country, to the house and family of its heavenly Father. These, then, are the objects, which, if once we are accustomed to regard ourselves as strangers and sojourners upon earth, will continually employ our thoughts.

The end of our journey will ever be uppermost in our minds, according to the precepts delivered in the scriptures, and the examples afforded us by the prophets and apostles—"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord; when shall I come, and appear before God! I desire to depart, and to be with Christ. Let us go forth, bearing our reproach; for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." These are the wishes and the expressions of men like ourselves, encompassed with the same infirmities. Why, then, are they not ours? Plainly, because we mistake or forget our true condition in this present world. We imagine ourselves to be at home, when we are really abroad, and upon a journey.

But although the traveller's first and chief delight is the recollection of his home, which lies as a cordial at his heart, and refreshes him every where, and at all seasons, this does by no means prevent him from taking that pleasure in the

several objects presenting themselves on the road, which they are capable of affording, and were indeed intended to afford. He surveys, in passing, the works and beauties of nature and art, meadows covered with flocks, valleys waving with corn, verdant woods, blooming gardens, and stately buildings. He surveys, and enjoys them perhaps, much more than their owners do, but leaves them without a sigh, reflecting on the far greater and sincerer joys that are waiting for him at home. Such, exactly, is the temper and disposition with which the Christian traveller should pass through the world. His religion does not require him to be gloomy and sullen, to shut his eyes, or to stop his ears; it debars him of no pleasure, of which a thinking and reasonable man would wish to partake. It directs him not to shut himself up in a cloister alone, there to mope and moan away his life; but to walk abroad, to behold the things which are in heaven and earth, and to give glory to him who made them; reflecting, at the same time, that if, in this fallen world, which is soon to be consumed by fire, there are so many objects to entertain and delight him, what must be the pleasures of that world, which is to endure for ever, and to be his eternal home! Flocks feeding in green meadows, by rivers of water, remind him of the future happy condition of the righteous, when "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." From fading plantations he carries his thoughts to the paradise of God, where, in immortal youth and beauty, grows the tree of life, whose leaf never withers, and which bears its fruit through the unnumbered ages of eternity. Earthly cities and palaces cause him to remember thee, O thou holy city, heavenly Jerusalem, whose walls are salvation, and thy gates praise, and the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple in the midst of thee! He who sees the world in this light, will draw its sting, and disarm it of its power to hurt; he will so use it, as not to abuse it, because the fashion of it passes away; he will so enjoy it, as to be always ready to leave it for a better; he will not think of settling at his inn,\* because it is pleasantly situated. He remembers that

\* See a beautiful passage, applicable in the Christian sense, Epict. B. II. chap. xxiii. p. 212.—*Carter*.



he is a traveller; he forgets not that he is a stranger in the earth.

We are not, however, to expect, that we shall meet with nothing but pleasure and entertainment on the road of life. The traveller knows he is to look for difficulties and dangers upon a journey, especially if it be a long one, and through an enemy's country. The ways may be rough, or deep; the weather stormy and tempestuous; robbers and murderers may attack him in the road, or wild beasts spring upon him from the forest; and the accommodations and provisions, from which he is to seek refreshment after his fatigue, may prove very ill qualified to afford it. Against all these incidents, possible and probable, the wise traveller is fore-armed with courage and patience, two qualities, without which his expedition is likely to be very uncomfortable. And here he finds his chief support from the consideration, that all these inconveniences will have an end; that he is abroad, upon a journey; and that all he can suffer will be amply recompensed by the comforts and heartfelt joys he is to experience at home.

Let the same mind be also in the Christian traveller, who is accomplishing his journey through this world to another.

Let him not think to find the path always smooth, or to tread continually upon roses. In a world like ours, there are more thorns than flowers. Often, in the concerns of life, will he find himself perplexed with doubts, and entangled in difficulties, through which he must make his way with toil, and not without pain. His passage will be obstructed by rocks of offence, at which, unless he tread with skill and caution, he will stumble and fall. Frequently, therefore, will he have occasion to cry out, "O hold thou up my goings in thy paths, O Lord, that my footsteps slip not! Give thine angels charge over me, to keep me in all my ways!"

As the road will not always be safe beneath, so neither will the sun always shine upon him from above. Life is a day, and in a day there are many changes of weather. Youth is the morning, when the sky, perhaps, is clear and serene; every thing smiles upon our traveller, and invites him to proceed. But, anon, all is overcast, and the heaven grows black with clouds and wind. The hour of prosperity is past, and the storms of adversity and affliction gather

round his head. The rain descends, the lightnings flash, the thunder roars, and the Almighty seems to set his face against him.—“Fearfulness and trembling come upon him, horror overwhelms him, and he says, O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander afar off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.”

Nor is this the whole of his danger. There are those who lie in wait, at such dark seasons, to despoil him of all that is truly dear and valuable. Evil men and evil spirits endeavour to deprive him of his honour, his virtue, his integrity, his religion, his life—his eternal life. The troubles of the world, consuming cares, and envenomed passions, are in motion, like the wild beasts of the forest, howling and hissing at him from all quarters. Now he has need of all his courage and steadfastness, and it behoves him to march on resolutely, holding fast, in one hand, the shield of faith, in the other, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; strengthening and comforting himself with those divine words of the psalmist, in the 91st Psalm—“Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.”

Such are the dangers and hardships to be encountered by the Christian traveller, who, considering himself as such, and knowing he can no otherwise attain to the end of his journey, encounters them accordingly, and at length overcomes them all, upon the principle thus laid down by St. Paul—“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

On the same principle, the Christian traveller, like all others, takes up with the accommodations he finds on the road, and learns to be "content with such things as he hath." No traveller was ever in greater straits than St. Paul. But hear what he says of himself—"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need." Were we settled upon earth for ever, there would be some excuse for our being solicitous where we lived, what we ate, what we drank, and wherewithal we were clothed. But when we consider, in how very short a time it will be exactly the same thing, whether we dwelt in a palace, or a cottage; whether we sat down to two courses, or two dishes; whether our garments were made of silk, or of wool; whether we were waited on by twenty servants, or by one; it is not worth while to break the peace of our minds about such unessential circumstances. If God vouchsafe us a share of the good things of the world, in our passage through it, let us enjoy them with thankfulness, and let us be charitable and kind to our fellow travellers, who are not so well provided for. If such good things are denied us, still let us be thankful for what we have. It is far better to want them, than to be wedded to them. Let us not forget, that he who travels, as well as he who "contends for the mastery," must be "temperate in all things," if he would travel with ease and pleasure: and, therefore, considering the difficulty of continuing so in the midst of plenty, it is happy for us, generally speaking, when temptations to be otherwise are not thrown in our way.—"I beseech you," says St. Peter, "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." We are strangers and pilgrims. We must up, and be moving on. The Lord of life, to show that on earth he had no abiding city, was born at an inn; and there was no room for him, but in the stable. Such were the accommodations with which he was content. What he once said to his disciples, he says to all—"Arise, let us go hence."

But it is not enough, that the Christian traveller be content. Let him be cheerful, and beguile the tediousness of the way with a sacred song - "Awake up, my glory; awake,

lute and harp!—I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people, I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will praise my God while I have my being. And so shall my words please him; my joy shall be in the Lord.” This is the language of the very same person, who says, in the text, —“I am a stranger in the earth.” Thus it was, that he consoled himself under the fatigues of his journey, and rejoiced even in tribulation, because every step he set, however painful, brought him nearer to his eternal home. Consider the case of those two travellers, Paul and Silas, in the dungeon of a prison, at the dead of midnight, with their feet fast in the stocks. And, in this situation, how did they employ themselves? In groaning and lamenting? No; they “prayed and sang praises unto God.” Let us hear no more of murmuring and complaining. In all things let us give thanks, and be able to say, with David,—“Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”

It will greatly contribute toward relieving the sufferings and hardships of our journey, if we can have the company of some of like sentiments, tempers, and dispositions, who are travelling the same way, with whom we may converse about the country to which we are all going, consult upon the best means of arriving safely at it, and mutually communicate our observations upon the objects that present themselves, and the incidents that happen upon the road.—“They that fear thee,” says the psalmist, “will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in thy word. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and keep thy precepts.—We took sweet counsel together, and walked in the house of God as friends.” He who travels alone, will often find himself weary and melancholy: he will often want help and assistance. As the Wise Man observes,—“Two are better than one; for if they fall (and who can at any time be assured he shall not?) the one will help up his fellow.” Much does it concern us, in making our connexions, and choosing our friends, to make and choose such, as will forward us on our way, and continue with us unto the end; and it is happy for us, when they who stand in the nearest relation to us, and with whom we must, of ne-



cessity, spend the greatest part of our time, are of this sort. Blessed are they, who thus go through life together, in peace and love, comforting and encouraging one another, and talking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. To these heirs of salvation angels delight to minister; and that which happened to the two disciples, upon the road to Emmaus, will happen to them.—“Jesus himself,” though they do not know it, will draw near, and go with them.”

With such companions, and such a guide, our journey will seem short, because it will become pleasant; and there will be nothing formidable even in the last and worst part of it, death itself. In the history which the scriptures give us of good men in old time, it is worth observing, that their dying appears to have been a circumstance as easy and indifferent to them as to the historian who relates it. With Moses, it is only—Go up to Mount Nebo, and die. With Aaron—Ascend to Mount Hor, and do the same. And, before them, we find the holy patriarchs, when the appointed hour came, calling their children about them, bequeathing to posterity the promised blessing of salvation by Messiah, gathering up their feet into the bed, and dying with the same satisfaction and complacency as they would have fallen asleep. And why? but because, having been always accustomed to think of themselves as strangers in the earth, they constantly regarded death as a departure to that other and better country, of which they lived in perpetual expectation, and could not, therefore, be surprised or alarmed, at being called to take possession, as knowing, they began their journey, in order to finish it. Could we think as they did, we should live as they did, and die as they did. Nor should we grieve for the dead who have died in the Lord. They have only passed us upon the road, and are gone, as it were, to prepare for our reception. And surely, in the journey of life, as in other journeys, it is a pleasing reflection, that, whatever usage we may meet with abroad (and strangers do not often meet with the best), we have friends, who are thinking of us at home, and will receive us with joy, when our journey is at an end.—And lo, the heavens are opened, and the habitations of the blessed disclose themselves to view. The glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, all that have departed hence, from the beginning of

the world, in the faith and fear of God, a great multitude which no man can number, are seen standing in white robes, with palms in their hands. They beckon us away to those blissful regions, from whence sin and sorrow are for ever excluded, and into which, they who are admitted, “go no more out.” All once, like us, trod, with many a toilsome step, this valley of weeping; all once were “strangers in the earth.” Now they rest from their labours, and are entered into the joy of their Lord. They have accomplished happily their journey; and, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises. A seraph’s voice, from the eternal throne, calls to every one of us — “Go, and do thou likewise.”

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## DISCOURSE LVI.

### THE FULNESS OF TIME.

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*When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.—*  
Gal. iv. 4, 5.

THE words make part of the epistle for the day. And none could have been chosen with greater propriety: none can more fully represent to us, in a short compass, the wonderful nature and blessed effects of the redemption, begun, as at this season, to be wrought for us. Highly fit it is, that our thoughts should still continue to be employed upon it. The angels desire to look into it: we surely cannot yet be weary of meditating upon it. To refresh, to quicken, to fix, the impressions that may have been made, is the intention of the following Discourse, in which some reflections shall be offered, on the several particulars of the text, exactly in the order in which they lie; for a better cannot be devised.

I. "When the fulness of time was come." The same truth is here pointed out, which is taught us by the Wise Man, in the book of Ecclesiastes;—"To every thing, and to every purpose under heaven, there is a time, and a season." Events do not come to pass, one at this time, and another at that, by mere chance. He, who created the world, regulates and disposes the things that are passing in it, appointing to each its time. This time, all circumstances considered, is always the very best and fittest. It is impossible for *us* to consider all circumstances, or, perhaps, one thousandth part of them; and, therefore, it is impossible for us to say, which time is the best and fittest. The great God only can do this. To the eye of the divine mind (if we may so express it), all events, with all their circumstances, from the beginning to the end of the world, present themselves at once, and stand arranged, by infinite wisdom, each in its due time and place. This all-seeing, and all-directing providence extends not only to the rise and fall of empires, or the births and deaths of great men, but to every the smallest concern. The hairs of our heads are numbered, and a sparrow falls not to the ground unnoticed. In the scriptures, where the designs of God are opened, and we are admitted, as it were, behind the scenes, this is shown in many instances. In others, where his designs are kept secret from us, we must learn to trust, and not presumptuously determine, that this or that event takes place at an *unseasonable* time, or fancy that we could have ordered things in a better manner.

What has been said must apply in the strongest manner to the birth of Christ, which being the most important event that ever did happen, must needs have happened at that very time, which of all others was most proper, by the apostle in the text called "the fulness of time;" when all the designs of God respecting it were ripe and ready for accomplishment. A thinking man, who sits down to consider the dispensations going before from the beginning, with the then state of the world, both Jew and Gentile, may discover many reasons why the time of Christ's appearance was the proper time. Some have asked, why he did not come sooner? And if the world should last many ages longer, and his religion seem to be perishing, others may ask, why he did not come later? All such questions have no foundation,

but in our own ignorance. Could we see as God sees, we should see that all was right: since we cannot see, we must believe, because all wise and all righteous is He, who has ordained it so to be as it is. I would wish deeply to impress this general consideration on your minds, as one which alone will carry you safe through all doubts and difficulties, all dangers and distresses. Only love God, and serve him; and then, "all things" cannot but "work together," under his direction, "for good" to you, in the end.

II. "When the fulness of time"—that time judged to be, on all accounts, the fittest—"was come, God sent forth his Son." He had a Son therefore, to send forth; that Son, of whom it is said, that he was in the bosom of the Father; that he had glory with the Father before the world was; that Son, by the beloved disciple, St. John, styled, "THE WORD, who was in the beginning with God, and who was God; by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made;" that Son, who came down from heaven; who "came from the Father, and returned to him;" that Son, who says, "I and the Father are one; I am in the Father, and the Father in me; he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." These passages show you, as clearly as language can show, that the Saviour born, as at this season, though born as a man, was in reality more than man; a divine person, who had being in heaven before the world began; who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven; whose title is the SON, or the WORD of God. That these two titles belong to one and the same person, will be evident to you, from a wonderful description in the 19th chapter of St. John's Revelation, which I cannot forbear reciting.—"I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself; and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called, THE WORD OF GOD. And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." The being here described is certainly a *person*; and that person can be no other than our ever blessed Redeemer, going forth to judge and take vengeance on his enemies. He is



styled, the WORD OF GOD, and must be the same WORD mentioned in the beginning of St. John's gospel, who "was in the beginning with God, and was God." These things none can, with any show of reason, gainsay. Proceed we therefore—

III. To reflect upon the next particular, that this divine person became man—"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." And if the Son, thus sent forth, were indeed no more than a mere man, why should it be said, "made of a woman;" since every man is made of a woman, and, in the nature of things, can have no other original? There is nothing extraordinary in the circumstance; and in speaking of a mere man, it could never have been mentioned. But the fact is, that the divine person, above described, appeared in our nature, and was "made of a woman." Herein is the wonder of love, the root and fountain of our salvation, pointed out by the apostle, and expressed, or implied in so many other passages of scripture; such as these which follow—"The Word being incarnate, that is, made, or becoming flesh; the Son of God being sent in the likeness of sinful flesh; partaking of flesh and blood; his taking the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of men; being found in fashion as a man; assuming the seed of Abraham; his descending from heaven; coming forth from the Father; being sent, and coming into the world; the dayspring from on high visiting us; eternal life being manifested." In the name of common sense, if our Saviour be in reality no more than a mere man, like other men, what can all these expressions signify? They must have been used (as one should be tempted to think) only to deceive and mislead mankind in that point, which of all others is the most important. No—surely, the result of all taken together, is, and can be, no other than this—There was a blessed and glorious person, who, from all eternity, did subsist in the form of God, being the Son of God, one in nature with his Father, the express image, or apt character of his substance; by a temporal generation, he truly became man, taking human nature into an union with the divine; made "like unto us in all things, (as the apostle saith) sin only excepted." He had a body like ours, which was nourished, and did grow; which needed and received sustenance; which was tender and sensible, frail, and subject to suffering; which was bruised with stripes, torn with scourges, pricked with thorns, pierced with

nails, transfix'd with a spear, which was mortal, and underwent death, as our mortal bodies do, when the breath goes out of them.

He had also a soul endued with the same faculties as ours. His understanding was capable of learning and improvement; for as man, he was ignorant of some things, which he might know; and "he grew," it is said, "in *wisdom*, as well as stature." His will was subject and submissive to the divine will.—"Let this cup, if it be possible, pass from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." He had the several appetites of meat, of drink, of sleep, and rest; for we read, that he was hungry, that he thirsted, that he was weary. He had the various human passions and affections—such as were natural and unblamable—and these of the most troublesome and afflictive sort; such as zeal, pity, sorrow. Upon occasion of his friend Lazarus's death, he groaned in spirit and was troubled; he then, and upon other occasions, did weep; and you all know what excesses of sorrow, what anxieties and agonies, what tribulations, disturbances, and amazements, the evangelists describe him to have undergone at his passion.

These particulars place it beyond all doubt, that he was perfect man, as the passages before cited show that he was perfect God; perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. His human nature was the true tabernacle, or tent, which the apostle mentions, of a more perfect building than that of old; the Divinity was the GLORY, which, descending from heaven, filled it, took possession of it, and dwelled in it.—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us—God sent forth his Son, made of a woman."

And why should this be thought a thing incredible? If "the reasonable soul, and flesh," the former a spiritual, the latter a material substance, be so united, and that in a manner, by us utterly unknown and inconceivable, as to compose "one man;" why should we deny the possibility of such an union between God and man, as to render them "one Christ?"\* Does reason protest against it? Nay,

\* Q. the objection, that the cases are not parallel, since in the former there are not two *conscious* beings united; and that God and the creature should have *one* and the *same consciousness*, is not conceivable.—See Doddridge's Lectures, p. 394.

verily, but she bears a powerful testimony to it. The expectation of such a *divine* Saviour, was from the beginning; the notion went out into all the earth. That God should, in some extraordinary manner, visit and dwell with man, is an idea, which, as we read the writings of the ancient heathens, meets us in a thousand different forms. It is the voice of nature, sickening, languishing, and at her last gasp, under a load of sin and sorrow, from which none less than God could deliver her; and crying out, from age to age, with the dying patriarch—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!—Lord, in thee, in thee alone have I trusted; let me never be confounded."

Such, then, is the Saviour, whose birth at Bethlehem we this day celebrate.—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son;" and what love must any person bear to the world, who could do this for it? The Son abased himself, that we might be exalted. The Son became a subject, that the subjects—and those subjects in rebellion—might become sons; "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And what more could have been done by a Son?

The Saviour was God, that he might save us by his Almighty power; that he might remove the most stubborn difficulties in the way to our salvation; that he might subdue our enemies, command nature, abolish death, and vanquish hell; that he might satisfy justice, conciliate and appease, by dignity of person, value of merit, nearness and dearness to the Father; that on his doctrine, his example, and his laws, might be stamped the character of divinity, denominating them the coin of heaven, the royal image and superscription, which it is treason to efface.

The Saviour was man, that as man lost the divine favour, man might regain it; that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many might be made righteous;" that "as man did approve, so man might condemn, sin in the flesh;" that "as by man came death, by man might come also the resurrection of the dead; as in the first Adam all die, even so in Christ, the second Adam (who was likewise 'the Lord from heaven'), may all be made alive;" that through sympathy, compassion, a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, he might propitiate for our faults, intercede for our welfare, pity and aid us in our distresses; be tender of our good, sensible of our necessities:

“in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” In a human form he became visible, audible, familiar; less amazing, and more obliging. He became a copy for us in behaving, in moderating our appetites, in governing our passions, in employing the powers of soul and body, in passing through all conditions, and accommodating ourselves to all events. So lively a pattern, with such power, and to such effect, could never otherwise have been exhibited. O what a comfort it is to think we shall be judged by such a person! And with what propriety was he appointed to recapitulate (as the apostle has it) and reconcile all things in heaven and earth, thus allied, as he was, to both parties; Son of God, brother to us; that so he might dispense God’s grace, and purchase our peace!—“Lord, to whom else, then, shall we go? Thou hast”—thou only canst have—“the words of eternal life.”

## DISCOURSE LVII.

THE EXISTENCE AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE HOLY ANGELS.

*All the angels stood round about the throne.*—Rev. vii. 11.

AMONG the festivals of our church, we find one celebrated at this season of the year in honour of the holy angels. To justify such her appointment, and point out to you the many advantages to be obtained from it, is the design of the following Discourse; in which some thoughts shall be offered on the existence of angels, their nature and condition; the perfect obedience paid by them to God; and the kind services rendered to man.

And, first, respecting the existence of angels.

It is needless to trouble you with the opinions of the



heathen concerning beings of this kind ; because they could utter nothing but what was either merely conjectural, or else derived to them by tradition from an original revelation. We have better guides : we can go to the fountain head. Conjecture is useless, where certainty can be had ; and tradition of no account, when the revelation itself is before us.

Nor doth it seem at all necessary, by a long series of texts, to demonstrate, that there are such beings as angels. They who have ever looked into the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, can have no doubt upon this head. The fact is clear : our business shall be to convince you that it is interesting.

For it may be said, perhaps, To what purpose discourse to us concerning the inhabitants of a world future, remote, and of which our ideas are very confused, and indeterminate ? Let us rather attend to the world in which we live, and to them that dwell therein.

It would be perfectly right so to do, if the world in which we live were the only one with which we were connected, and death the final period of our existence. But no one person, I dare say, who now hears me, seriously imagines this to be the case. And if there be another world which is to receive us for ever, after our departure hence, the existence of its inhabitants, with whom we are to spend an eternity, becomes a speculation both pleasing and important. This state of our being, you say, is future. It is so, to day ; but before to morrow, it may be present to some ; a very few years must render it present to all. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the change is effected : every connexion with this world is dissolved, and we become at once citizens of another, and members of a society altogether new. You say it is remote. That by no means appears. It may not be “ far from every one of us.” A man who had lived always in the darkness of a prison, and only heard of the world which we now enjoy, might fancy, from all which his own experience taught him, that it must needs be remote ; whereas, nothing more would be requisite to convince him of his mistake, than to open the doors of his prison-house, and lead him forth to liberty and the sun. Could a child, in its mother’s womb, be made sensible it was to be born into a new world, it might entertain the same prejudice

respecting the supposed distance ; but when the appointed time for its birth came, a single instant would show that it was *only* a prejudice. The spiritual and eternal world, into which we are, at a destined hour, to be born, may be, like its divine Maker and King, near us, and round about us, in a manner of which we are not aware, nor shall be, till we enter it ; till we burst the intervening shell, and all the glories of the invisible system present themselves to view.

But our ideas of this future world are confused and indeterminate. Not more so than those conceived by the man in prison, or the child in the womb, could it conceive any, of the present world, in which we live : not more so, than the ideas formed of things not seen, by comparison with things seen. We have the divine assurance of God's word, that such a world exists ; and the pictures there drawn of it, if we considered them as we ought to do, must make us impatient to behold the original.

But the truth is, that whatever ideas of a future and invisible world may be, at certain times, impressed upon our minds, they are presently effaced by a tide of business, or pleasure, and stand therefore in need of being continually refreshed and renewed. Now, what can do this so effectually as frequent meditations on the blessed inhabitants of that world, the holy angels ? We love to recollect a place, by the circumstance of those friends we have in it. By thinking of them, we are led to think of the place where they are, and learn to love and desire it the more. An intercourse is by this means opened, a correspondence established, between heaven and earth.

And here, give me leave to ask, whether we are not often guilty of neglecting and forgetting, in a manner unkind, at least, our friends who are gone before us to a better country ? When once they are departed, we suffer the remembrance of them soon to slip from our minds, as if we thought they ceased any longer to exist. To pray for the dead, seems needless and absurd, unless we supposed their condition in another life still undetermined, and that they were undergoing pains, from which our prayers might contribute to release them. But to commemorate the day of their departure ; to think of them, and their situation ; to recollect their virtues ; and express our wishes of seeing, and being with them again, in God's good time—this surely would be an

exercise equally pious and profitable, and to which no good Protestant can have any reasonable objection. The spirits of the just, when gone hence, are with the angels; we should think of them together, invigorating at once our faith, our hope, and our charity. Thus much for the instruction and consolation to be derived from the scripture doctrine of the existence of angels. Still more will be derived, from a consideration—

*Secondly*, Of what is revealed concerning their nature and condition. Shut up in this world of matter, we might be apt to imagine, there are no creatures of a nature and condition different from our own. But we are informed, upon the best authority, that there are creatures of a very different nature and condition. Angels are spirits. Not formed of the same gross materials, they are free from the inconveniences we feel, the temptations and sufferings to which we are subject. Their appearance is glorious as the light of heaven; and their motion, like that, rapid, and, as it were, instantaneous. Pure and active as the most pure and active elements with which we are acquainted, light and fire; strangers equally to sin and sorrow; they live evermore in the presence of God, and enjoy all the felicity which that presence can bestow; expressing, continually, their sense of such felicity in hymns of praise before the throne. This is the sum and substance of the many descriptions to be met with in sacred writ.

The contemplation of so many excellent and happy beings opens our understandings, and enlarges our conceptions of the Creator's power and goodness.

But if we ourselves are miserable, what benefit, it will be asked, can result to us from contemplating the happiness of others? Will not our misery be rather aggravated than alleviated by it? We do not cease to be wretched upon earth, because the angels are otherwise in heaven.

Redeemed by the Son of God, leave off, O man, to complain! Wait but for a little while in faith and patience, and their happiness shall be yours. The Redeemer himself has said (and shall he not perform it!) that, at the resurrection, we shall become "like the angels of God." Is not the case then greatly altered? Is there no pleasure in contemplating a felicity, the model after which our own will be formed and fashioned? Surely it is the very consideration, which, above

all others, should cause us to forget our uneasiness, and remember our misery no more. Angels are glorious and happy beings, and we shall be so too! They are glorious, because they are pure; and we must be therefore pure, in order to be glorious. The misery complained of is the furnace, in which we are to be made pure, that dust and ashes may be changed into transparent glass.—“Purge away the dross (says the Wise Man), and a vessel shall come forth for the finer.” Our evil tempers and affections are that dross. With them we cannot enter into the kingdom of God; nor should find any happiness there, if we could enter. They must be separated, and left behind. Severe trials, very severe trials, are often necessary to separate them, and are sent for that purpose. When the metal is stubborn, coals of fire, for the most salutary purpose, are heaped upon its head. The Son of God is with his faithful servants in the furnace, and will bring them safely out; when, transformed to angels, they shall sing the song of the redeemed;—“It is good for us, that we have been afflicted.”

From the nature and condition of angels, let us advert—

*Thirdly*, To that perfect service, that ready and unlimited obedience, by them paid to their Almighty Creator. Their felicity does not consist in freedom and independence. An attempt was once made by some of them to attain it.—“There was war in heaven,” on that account: but Michael prevailed, and the dragon was cast out. The angels that fell, fell by rebellion; they who kept their station, kept it by obedience, and are thus addressed by the psalmist:—“Ye angels of his, ye that excel in strength, ye that fulfil his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his words.” Like the lightnings, which say, “Here we are,” they are represented as waiting before the throne, ready, at the divine command, to fly to the extremities of the world. Instead of using seditious language against their sovereign, we find Michael the archangel, “not bringing a railing accusation” against the great adversary himself, but mildly saying, “The Lord rebuke thee!” A circumstance much to be regarded by all who have the misfortune to be engaged in disputes. Nor are the angels more exact in loyalty to their King, than in preserving due subordination in their several ranks, and under their respective leaders; without which, peace could not be in heaven, any more than on earth. This was



the reflection of our judicious and admirable Hooker, when a friend asked him, just before his death, on what subject his thoughts might, at that time, be employed. The subject which engaged his dying thoughts, ought constantly to engage our living ones; since, in the prayer composed and delivered out to his disciples by our Lord and Saviour, the obedience of the angels is proposed as the pattern to be imitated by us; as the copy after which we should diligently write:—"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Were this once the case, then would "the heavens rejoice, and the earth be glad." The will of God would be sought, in order to be found; and found, in order to be executed. We do not indeed stand in the immediate presence, or receive our orders at once from the throne: but the scriptures convey them, and, by his gracious Spirit, "God is in the midst of us;" we likewise may "fulfil his commandment, by hearkening to the voice of his word." Had we but a due respect to the example set us by the angels, we should not be so careless, as we are, about knowing what the will of the Lord is; much less should we be averse from knowing it, because averse from doing it. Angels are ever on the watch; eager to do it, and therefore eager to know it. We should not presume to determine which precepts we may observe, and which we may neglect: the obedience of an angel is universal. We should not put off our duty from day to day: the obedience of an angel is prompt and ready. We should perform it, not as a task, but as a pleasure: the obedience of an angel is hearty and fervent: it is his delight, because he loves God: it would be ours, if we loved God, in the same degree. To live, no commandments are grievous. The difficulties remain as they were; but the motive overcomes them with ease. The contest, at first, among angelic spirits in heaven, and since, among the children of Adam, through all their successive generations, upon earth, has been, in reality, a contest between pride and love. The success and termination of it may direct us where to choose our party. Pride, as displayed in the rebellion of Lucifer, threw angels from the height of heaven, into the bottomless pit: love, as manifested in the obedience of Christ, exalted man, from the dust, to the thrones of angels in heaven. This leads us to consider—

*Lastly,* The benevolence and charity of the holy angels;

the love they have always shown for man, and the services by them rendered to him.

And here a scene opens, worthy of all admiration, gratitude, and praise. For never do those blessed spirits obey with greater delight the commands of their Maker, than when mankind is the subject of those commands; so deeply, from the beginning, have they interested themselves in our welfare.

When the world was created, and man put in possession of it, these "morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Angels accompanied those servants of the Most High, the ancient patriarchs, during the course of their pilgrimage. By angels was the law given on Sinai; by them were the armies of Israel directed, on their march through the wilderness, protected after their establishment in Canaan, and their enemies discomfited. By them was the Saviour proclaimed, on the night in which he was born; comforted, after his temptation; strengthened, in his passion; testified of, at his resurrection; attended, at his ascension. They shall again attend him, on his return to judgment, gather together his elect from the four winds, and celebrate his final triumph over our last enemy.—"Even now there is joy among them over one sinner that repenteth;" and the apostle says concerning them,—*"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?"*

Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, and causest him to be visited by celestial spirits? But, in the person of Christ, one far above all created spirits, did not disdain to visit him; and the court of heaven is only attendant on its king!—"Wherefore, when he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him."

But—"Are these things indeed so?" Do the holy angels take a decided part in our concerns? Let us, at length, take a part in them ourselves, and not continue wholly indifferent, as to what we have been, what we are, and what we shall be: some little time, surely, should be spent in the inquiry. Spirits above are active to save us; spirits below are active to destroy us; and we sleep, not to be awakened, perhaps, till it is too late.

At the creation of the world, did "the morning stars sing

together, and all the sons of God shout for joy?" And do men forget to be thankful for it? In a fit of spleen, do they say, they have no reason to be thankful for it? In a fit of infidelity, do they deny both the creation and the Creator? Such men, alas, there are; shame on them—equal shame on those who have no more sense than to admire and encourage them.—“Praise the Lord, all ye works of his, in all places of his dominion; and all ye sons of men, for whom those works were wrought: praise the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me praise his holy name.”

It is written,—“When he bringeth his first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him:” and have we lived to hear persons, calling themselves Christians, with Bibles in their hands, telling us, they find themselves obliged in conscience to quit the church, because she is guilty of idolatry in now doing—what she always has done—in paying divine honours to her Lord and Saviour? Such men likewise there are; and they too have their admirers and followers. The more is the pity! But marvel not: “it is the last time.”

To conclude—Are angels “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation;” rejoicing when we do well, and, consequently, grieving when we do otherwise? Have they been, in effect, under every dispensation, the *guardians* of the people of God? Let us duly reverence and respect them as such. When we consider them as “encamping round about us, to deliver us,” let us no longer fear the power of the enemy; since “they that are with us are more than they that are with them.” When we reflect, that they are witnesses of our actions, let us do nothing that may make us ashamed before them; nothing but what we would do if we saw them. When we remember that they are to give an account of us, upon their return to him who sent them, let us take care that they may give it with joy, and not with grief. Let not our conduct be such, as shall oblige them to quit their charge before the time. O terrible voice, that once heard, at midnight, in the temple at Jerusalem, foreboding its destruction, then near at hand—LET US GO HENCE! “Whoso defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” Our bodies are such temples. May no unlawful desires, no irregular passions, ever so desecrate them, as that conscience shall ring in our ears the

same dreadful sound; but may our heavenly friends and guardians continue with us to the end, to comfort us in our last sorrows, and support us in our expiring agonies; that, when breath shall forsake the body, the soul may be “carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom.”

## DISCOURSE LVIII.

### THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN HOLY PLACES.

*Will God indeed dwell on the earth?—1 Kings viii. 27.*

THE occasion of this numerous and solemn assembly calls upon us to consider well this question—a most awful and important question, and one which seems to have almost overwhelmed the vast and capacious mind of Solomon himself.—“Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built?” Certainly—That which is without bounds cannot be comprehended within that which has bounds, whether large or small; and, therefore, in a strict and proper sense, “the Most High”—as St. Stephen, alluding to this very passage, asserts in the 7th chapter of the Acts—“the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” But it is no less certain, that there is a sense, agreeable to which it may be truly said, that the Most High *does* dwell in temples made with hands. For this same king Solomon, in this same prayer at the dedication of the temple, has the following words:—“Jehovah said, that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever;” that is, during the old dispensation. And in one of the Psalms, God himself is introduced as saying:—“Jehovah hath chosen Sion; he



hath desired it for his habitation. "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Accordingly, we read, that "when the priests were come out of the holy place, the cloud filled the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister, because of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of Jehovah." The Master took possession of his house, and, for a time, displaced even his own servants, to show that he did so. As if he had said,—“The house which you have designed for my worship, I have designed for your blessing; what you have dedicated, I have accepted; what you have consecrated, I have hallowed; I have taken it for the purpose you intended.” Or, to use the far more emphatical words of the sacred penman—“I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me; I have hallowed this house which thou hast built to put my name there for ever, and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.”

Thus, notwithstanding the iniquities of mankind, and his own purity, as well as incomprehensible majesty, has God been pleased to dwell indeed on earth, and to vouchsafe an especial manifestation of his presence in holy places dedicated to his name, and set apart for his worship. An house designed for that end is, therefore, styled *the house of God*, or place of his residence. The custom of consecrating such places has prevailed in all ages, and throughout all nations. It obtained among the worshippers of false gods; but they derived it, with many other religious rites and institutions, from the worshippers of the true God, among whom we find it in the earliest times. It may be neither unentertaining nor uninteresting to trace, in few words, the history of these holy places, as it stands recorded in the scriptures of truth.

And here, it deserves well to be considered, that, before houses were built, even in Paradise itself, which seems to have been throughout what may be called, *holy ground*, God had yet a distinct place, a *holy of holies*, where, in some peculiar manner, he was wont to dwell. For our first parents, we are told, when they had offended, “hid themselves from *the presence of the Lord*,” an expression used afterward to denote that manifestation of himself which God was pleased to make in his temple.

When Cain and Abel offered sacrifice, it was, probably,

by divine appointment, and at a place, as well as a time, fixed upon for that purpose. It was offered, as we may reasonably suppose, before God, or to *the presence of Jehovah*, from whence, it is likely, descended the sacred fire, as it did under the law, to consume the sacrifice of Abel, and thereby testify its acceptance. The offering was burnt, that the offerer might be saved. The surety suffered, that the sinner might go free.

The patriarchs, we know, during their travels, wherever they came, built altars with their inclosures, and there “called on the name of Jehovah;” that *Name*, of which God said, when the temple was built, that he had “placed his Name there.”

On the spot where Jacob was favoured with his prophetic dream or vision—where he saw the communication opened between earth and heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the mystic ladder, as in the fulness of time they were to be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man,—on this hallowed spot he laid the first rudiments of a temple; he called the name of the place Bethel, that is, the house of God; for surely, said he, this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven! He set up a stone for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it, adding, “it shall be God’s house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will give the tenth unto thee.” Here, then, you have not only a *church*, but a *church endowed*.

“When Israel came out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from among the strange people,” they sojourned in the wilderness, travelling toward the land of promise. Their God and Saviour did not disdain to sojourn, and travel with them. As they dwelt in tents, he was pleased to do the same. In conformity to his own express direction, as to the framing every part of it, within and without, a sacred tabernacle was constructed and furnished in a proper manner to receive the divine guest. Thus the tabernacle of God was with men, and Moses there conversed with his Maker, as a man converses with his friend. From the mountains of Moab, Balaam viewed the camp of the chosen people, disposed in exact and beauteous order; he beheld them abiding in their tents, according to their tribes, with the cloud resting upon the holy tabernacle in the midst of them. What

wonder, that under the guidance of the Spirit of God, which came upon him, his thoughts should be carried back to the blissful bowers of Eden, and forward to the coming of the blessed person, who should restore them to the world?—"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side; as the trees of lign-aloes, which Jehovah hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? Surely, there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel."

As God vouchsafed to travel with his people in the tabernacle of Moses, so did it please him to rest with them in the temple of Solomon. The feast of the dedication of that temple afforded the most magnificent sight that was ever presented to the eyes of mortals. Imagine to yourselves a building, where scarce any thing appeared less valuable than silver and gold; a building, of which God himself condescended to be the architect, and which had therefore, in the design and execution, all the perfection that infinite wisdom could give it. Before this building, think you see the nation of the Israelites assembled, encircling their king, seated upon an exalted throne of burnished brass, with all the ensigns of majesty and royalty; while, amidst the harmony of different kinds of instruments, with the acclamations of a whole people, joining in a grand chorus of praise and thanksgiving, the glory of Jehovah, or a body of light above the brightness of the sun, descends from heaven, and fills the temple! Imagination can hardly reach the amazing idea. But thus is the scene described by the sacred writer.—"And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course: also the Levites, which were the singers, all of them being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets), it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as

one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah; and when they lifted up their voice, with the trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever; that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister, by reason of the cloud; for the glory of Jehovah filled the house of God. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah upon the house, they bowed themselves, with their faces to the ground, upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!" Never, after this, let us entertain low notions of God, or of the House where his glory dwelleth.

And is he then, think you, less present with us than he was with Israel? Is the Christian church less favoured than the Jewish church was? Have we lost any thing by the incarnation of his Son? Surely not. Let us consider a little. When man had offended his Maker—"Will God indeed dwell on the earth?" was a question which might well pose the deepest understanding. Some means must first be devised to reconcile him to the offender. Such means were devised; he himself had already devised them. God and man were to be united in Messiah, who should do away sin by the sacrifice of himself. This being foredetermined in the divine counsels, the communication between heaven and earth was restored, immediately after the fall, upon the strength of it: and if you ask, why God visited the sinful race of Adam, and took up his abode in a tabernacle, and a temple, the proper answer is, He did it, because that, in the fulness of time, the "Word was to be made flesh, and men were to behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." To that great event the divine appearances in old time looked forward. Accordingly, in the New Testament, we find the body of Christ styled "the *true* tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man:" and when the Jews were discoursing with our Lord concerning the then temple, and the time employed in building it, he made answer, alluding, and probably pointing, to his own body, "Destroy *THIS* temple, and in three days I will raise it again." Such being the reason of the



connexion reestablished between God and sinful men, and of his dwelling among them, can we possibly doubt of his dwelling in Christian churches, that have been consecrated to his service ever since the planting that religion in the world, when Christians had liberty and ability to erect such churches? It may be said, we do not see him, as the Israelites did. But the *glory*, or body of *light*, or *fire*, which the Israelites saw, was only a *sign* or *token* of his presence.—“God is a Spirit, whom no man hath seen, or can see.” We do not see the souls of those who are now assembled to worship him; yet are they present. The holy angels may be present at this time, and God himself, we trust, is so by his Spirit. You know who has said, “where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

You will be pleased to favour me with your attention, while I press upon your minds two consequences which follow from this doctrine of the divine presence in holy places, *viz.* the mercies of God to man, and the duties of man to God.

The king makes the court. Wherever the King of glory comes, all heaven comes in his train: when he descendeth from on high, as when he ascended thither, “he giveth gifts unto men;” the blessings of eternity are showered around: “he openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.” In his dedication prayer, king Solomon, personating, as it should seem, the great Mediator, states before God the various wants and miseries of his people, requesting that to those who should pray *in* or *toward* that temple, they might be supplied and relieved; “that thine eyes may be opened toward this house night and day; and hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, forgive.” Pardon for time past, and grace for time to come, comprehend, between them, the spiritual necessities of mankind, and both are supposed to have been justly and beautifully represented by the service and the furniture of the tabernacle and temple of old; the former by the acceptance of sacrifice, and the sprinkling of blood, without which there is no remission; the latter by the table of shewbread, the golden candlestick with its lamps, and the altar of

incense, denoting the support of our spirits by the true bread which cometh down from heaven, the instruction of our minds by the light of truth shining forth in the word of God, and the merits of a Redeemer ascending with the prayers of the faithful, to render them acceptable at the eternal throne. Under the new law, in like manner, at the baptismal font, and at the holy table, are exhibited and communicated the Spirit purifying and cleansing from sin, the body and blood of Christ strengthening and refreshing the souls of men. Such are the benefits (and what greater benefits can your hearts wish for, or your imaginations conceive?) to be obtained, through faith, in these holy places, where God is pleased to meet us, and to bless us, if indeed we are disposed to receive the blessing, by turning every one of us from his iniquities.

The duties of man, in return for these mercies of God, are evident.

“Reverence my sanctuary.” Every thing which bears a relation to God, ought surely to be revered by man; the house, more especially, wherein he condescends to dwell. It is the temper which sanctifieth the gift. In order to this, a church should be built and fitted up, it should be maintained and preserved, in such a manner, as by its appearance to excite and produce that reverence in every one who enters it; that so he may fall down on his knees and worship, checking himself, if at his entrance he has been guilty of any negligence, or inattention, with the patriarch’s reflection—“Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not! This is the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”

It may be said, “that God has been served, and may be served, acceptably, in any church, or without any church.” He may be served acceptably without a church, when it is not in our power to have one; and he may be served acceptably in a bad church, when it is not in our power to have a good one. The Saviour of men, in the day of his humiliation, did not disdain to be born in a stable; but they who love and honour him would not therefore invite him to come into one again. We expend much upon our own houses, to make them elegant as well as comfortable; should we grudge a little to render the house of God neat, and decent, and such as Christians may frequent, without endangering their health? It is true, that “whatever we give to God, we give

him of his own:" but one would not therefore give him the worst of his own. He is most honoured by the best; and let the best be his; who has a fairer claim to it?—"We cannot by our gifts profit the Almighty." But we may honour him, and profit ourselves; for while man is man, religion, like man, must have a body and a soul; it must be external as well as internal; and the two parts, in both cases, will ever have a mutual influence upon each other. The senses and the imagination must have a considerable share in public worship; and devotion will accordingly be depressed or heightened by the mean, sordid, and dispiriting, or the fair, splendid, and cheerful appearance of the objects around us. The effects produced respectively are like those we experience on seeing the habitation of God above overcast with clouds and darkness, or beholding it when the light of the sun is diffused over it by day, or when by night it is gilded with the softer glory of the moon, and studded with ten thousand stars. *You* must feel the truth of this observation, and rejoice as much as the Jews formerly mourned and wept, when in their minds they compared the old temple with the new one.

To a sanctuary thus exciting reverence by every thing in and about it, let due reverence be paid by all that approach it. Put off your shoes from off your feet, lay aside the defilement contracted by walking upon the earth; put off, as concerning the former conversation, the old man; wash you, make you clean; for the place whereon you stand is holy ground. Drive out the buyers and sellers; clear your hearts of all worldly cares and thoughts; for this house is the house of prayer: when you enter it, salute him that dwelleth therein, by a fervent ejaculation, and address yourselves, with attention and devotion, to his service. It is the presence chamber of the great King. Jehovah is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.

But the best and most effectual way of reverencing the sanctuary is, by letting the effects of our behaviour, when we are in it, appear to the world by our behaviour, when we are out of it; by living and acting in the spirit of religion.—"Holiness becometh thine house for ever:" holy persons in holy places.—"Without are dogs," and other unclean creatures. Angels visit churches, and men who do so should in temper and disposition resemble them. When the sons

of God present themselves, the imagination is shocked at the idea of Satan also coming among them, of blasphemy and profaneness, impurity and malignity being found in the sanctuary; the abomination, which maketh desolate, standing in the holy place!—"He that defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy;" and it is well if he be not provoked to forsake the temple. O terrible sound of voices said to have been heard in the dead of night by the priests ministering in the temple, a little before the destruction of Jerusalem—"Let us go hence!"

As the house of God therefore is new, let your faith and your devotion be renewed with it. You have invited him to dwell among you; be it your endeavour to detain him. He is your God and Father; you are his people and his children. Walk before him as the people of such a God; behave as the children of such a Father. Let the very sight of this holy place recall to your minds these relations, and the duties suggested by them, from day to day, from week to week, from year to year, from age to age. For the blessing is to you and yours. Want of proper accommodations in the church can no longer be pleaded as an excuse for the absence of yourselves, or families. There will be room for all—"young men and maidens, old men and children"—all may praise the name of the Lord; all may offer up their prayers to him; all will be heard by him.

That the rising generation may be disposed and qualified to use these advantages, they must be instructed betimes in the first principles of religion. In many cases, the parents are not able themselves to instruct their children, or to be at the expense of having them instructed. Indeed, if they were, means have hitherto been wanting to effect it, for want of a proper person to undertake the task, and a proper place in which to perform it. Both are now provided. An institution of this kind is about to be set on foot, and has met with a seasonable support by the judicious application of a benefaction, the produce of which, greatly increased since the time of the bequest, seems to have been intended for the very purpose. The design, however, cannot be carried into execution without that kind and generous assistance, which I am this day to ask at your hands, and which English hearts never suffer to be asked in vain.

Vice is the daughter of ignorance, and the mother of



shame and pain, of misery and sorrow, temporal and eternal. To rescue the children of the poor from ignorance, is to save them from all its mournful consequences. Nor let any one apprehend, they will know too much. They will be taught to know their Maker, and themselves; to be contented with their station, and to perform the duties of it. Creatures made in the image of God, and redeemed by the blood of his Son, ought not to know less: and he who knows so much, will have no reason to regret, at the last day, that he did not know more. By contributing toward the furtherance of this pious and charitable undertaking, you do a work acceptable to God, who would have all to be saved, and, as the means of salvation, brought to a knowledge of the truth: you do a work acceptable to Christ, who, when he said, "Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not," said, in the strongest manner, by implication, neglect no possible method of encouraging and assisting them to come; you do a work acceptable to your country, in furnishing it with so many useful members; in rendering those a blessing to it, which would otherwise have been its curse; nay, perhaps, in preserving it (if it can be preserved), by providing, that the succeeding generation shall be more virtuous than the present: you do a work in the highest degree honourable and advantageous to yourselves, because it is a work which will be acknowledged and rewarded by the world's Redeemer and its Judge, when all the stately and idle monuments of pride, vanity, and folly, shall sink into perdition, and the remembrance of them vanish for ever.

There is but one thing more, of which you could wish to be assured, namely, that what is liberally given may be rightly applied. And of this, I think, you have sufficient security in the consideration of the person intrusted with the care of it, under whose direction, by the assistance chiefly of those his friends, who compose the present illustrious assembly, this fair and goodly fabrick, to the astonishment of all around it, hath been begun and completed within the space of a year; who esteems this day to be the happiest day of his life; who requesteth not others to do that, which he would be himself unwilling to do; and who seems, through life, to have formed his conduct upon the maxim laid down by that great master of holy living, the excellent Bishop Jeremy Taylor—"The way for a man to be a saver by his religion,

is to deposit one part of his fortune in the temple, and the other in the hands of the poor." That such a shepherd may long be continued a blessing to his flock, and that his flock may ever be sensible of the blessing, hear, O Lord, our supplications in heaven, thy dwelling place, and, when thou hearest, grant them, for the sake, and through the merits of Jesus Christ; our only Saviour and Redeemer, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, for ever, world without end. Amen.

## DISCOURSE LIX.

### SUBMISSION TO GOVERNMENT.

*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.—*  
1 Pet. ii. 13.

RELIGION came down from heaven, and was designed to carry us thither. Its great object is the everlasting happiness of man with his God in another and a better world. But it neglects not to provide for his comfort, by regulating his behaviour, in this. It labours to persuade him, that virtue best promotes his true interest in both; it has contrived, that he can advance toward the former, only by a performance of his duties in the latter.

His duties are many, springing from the various relations in which his Maker has been pleased to place him. No sooner is he born, but he comes under the obligation of duty to his parents as a son, and to his governors as a subject. A state of nature is a state of society; and no society can subsist without government of some kind or other.

In this class of duties, as in all the rest, it is necessary that we should be instructed from time to time; and no time more proper for the purpose, than when we commemorate, as we do upon the anniversary of this day, the accession of our sovereign to the throne of these kingdoms. In the course of the service for the day, certain portions of scripture are

selected with this view. The text is taken from that appointed for the epistle, being a part of the second chapter of the first Epistle of St. Peter, where that apostle delivers his injunctions fully and clearly. As St. Paul has written his sentiments in the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, by taking them into consideration, together with those of St. Peter, we shall find ample matter whereon to employ our thoughts, and, “in the mouth of two witnesses will every truth be established.”

Obedience to government is by both apostles pressed upon all Christians.—“Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,” or “powers that are set over us:” these are St. Paul’s words. St. Peter’s are to the same effect—“Submit yourselves to the king as supreme, and to rulers as those that are sent by him;” as bearing his authority, and acting in his name, from whom power descends through all inferior and subordinate magistrates, down to the least and lowest. The streams are many, but the fountain is one.

The reasonableness of this apostolical precept is suggested by the terms used to convey it; for why “rulers and governors,” unless it be indeed their office to rule and govern, our duty to submit and obey? If the governed are to govern the governors, from that moment there is an end of government: all is strife and confusion: a civil war will be the consequence, and the sword must determine who shall govern. If a state cannot settle itself, some neighbouring state will take the opportunity to invade it, and reduce it under a foreign yoke. So will its last condition be worse than its first, and, seeking liberty in an improper way, it will be sure to find slavery in the end.

But, secondly, that there should be government, and that men should obey it, is the will and appointment of God. Thus St. Paul;—“There is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God:” and St. Peter;—“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man,” or “every institution of this sort among men, for the Lord’s sake; it is the will of God.” “Ye must be subject not only for wrath,” or “for fear of punishment,” adds St. Paul, “but also for conscience sake;” *i. e.* because you know in your hearts, that God has enjoined you so to be: and that in obeying your governors, you obey him.

Of government there have been different kinds, among

men in different ages and different countries. At the beginning, there were only the children of one man, living under the care of their father. These dispersed, and became heads of their own families respectively; or many families might agree to live under one chief, and make up little governments of tribes or clans. Then disputes arose, till one stronger than the rest subdued them, and forced them to unite under him. Thus arose the large governments, which likewise contended with each other, till at length one of them swallowed up the others, and became almost universal, giving place itself after a time to a superior power. In this way succeeded to each other, the empires of the Assyrians, Persians, Grecians, and Romans; out of which last, when overthrown and broken in pieces, sprang the empires and kingdoms at this day subsisting in the world.

Thus again, as to *forms* of government; some nations are governed by one man; some by the principal nobility; some by a council of men, chosen to represent the people. Our own is a happy mixture of all three, so contrived, that the parts are a mutual check upon each other; and if there be at any time an error in one, it is corrected by the remaining two. Governments by assemblies of the people at large cannot be well carried on, but in small districts, where the people are not too numerous, and can be conveniently called together. They have always been subject to frequent seditions and commotions; as may be seen in the histories of Greece and Rome.

The principle to be collected, from the texts above cited, is plainly this; that the law of God enjoins obedience to every government settled according to the constitution of the country in which it subsists; and that, even though the governor should be elected by the people; as in lesser matters, a man is free to choose that master into whose service he will enter; but when he is once entered, the scriptures press upon him from thenceforth the several duties which a servant owes to his master. The members of a corporation choose one from among themselves for their annual magistrate; but when he is chosen, they are bound to show him the respect and obedience which are due to his office, while he continues in it. Obedience, in short, is enjoined to the civil magistrate, under whatever form of government we happen to live; nor does that obedience



extend to the relinquishing those rights which the citizen may legally claim. St. Paul himself, at Philippi, refuses to comply with the directions intimated by the magistrates, unless the magistrates themselves, by a mark of respect, will make him amends for the illegality of their proceedings in punishing him uncondemned: of the centurion who was standing near, when he was about to be scourged, he demanded the privilege due to a Roman citizen: and when Festus proposed his trial to be held at Jerusalem, the apostle boldly made his appeal to Cæsar, as every Roman citizen might do. These claims of civil privileges do not indicate unconditional submission to power illegally exercised, but refer us, for the practice of our duty in particular cases, to the laws and constitution of our country.\*

A third reason assigned by our two apostles for obedience to government, is the benefit derived from it to the community. It is instituted for the protection of good men, by the punishment of evil ones. Of these latter, how many are there in the world? And how many more would there be, had we no laws, or, which is the same thing, no magistrate to execute them? Every man might act as his interest or his passions at the moment led him, and no man's property or life would be secure for half an hour. The governor, doubtless, is a man, fallible and peccable; he may be deceived, or he may do wrong without being deceived: he beareth the sword, and he may strike with it improperly: but if, to remedy an occasional inconvenience of this sort, you dissolve government, what will be the consequence? Why, more mischief will be done by the people, thus let loose, in a month, than would have been done by the governor in half a century. If all men were perfectly wise, and perfectly good, and able to govern themselves, there might be no need of any to govern them; but till that time shall come, and, in the present state of human nature, it may be said of too many of our own species, as it is said of some other creatures in the book of Psalms, "their mouths must be held with bit and bridle, lest they fall upon thee." And, therefore, so it has been from the beginning: the bridle has been holden sometimes by one, and sometimes by another; but there always has been a bridle, and always a person to hold it: nor, perhaps, does any man living

\* See Huntingford's Visitation Sermon, p. 30.

know any other man than himself, whom he thinks fit to be trusted with the absolute and unbounded liberty of doing what he pleased.

A fourth reason given by St. Peter for the precept inculcated, is the honour of Christianity—"So is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Christianity being a new sect, rising in opposition to the idolatrous religion of the Roman empire, its enemies took occasion to represent it as dangerous to government: the apostle, therefore, is the more earnest to wipe off this aspersion. He assures the world, that Christians were men not factious and turbulent, but quiet and peaceful, minding their own business, and knowing nothing more of politics, than to obey their governors, and to pray for them; it being a principle with them to do this from conscience, notwithstanding any difference of religion between themselves and the heathens; and to suffer, rather than to rebel.—"The ignorance of foolish men" was thus "put to silence;" it was shown, that they had made the objection against Christianity, not knowing what it was, and totally mistook the nature of it, since it commanded subjection not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward:—"For (proceeds the apostle) this is thankworthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously." This example of our blessed Lord was carefully followed by the apostles and first Christians. The sentiments of our own church are sufficiently declared by the appointment of the scripture which we have been considering as the epistle for the day.

Cases, doubtless, may arise, in which this duty will seem hard to practise.

As to the duty being hard to practise, many others are equally so. Is it not hard, that, in some circumstances, we must give up houses and lands, father, mother, wife, children,

yea, and one's own life too, so as not to seek to save it by going one step out of the rule of the gospel? And is it not hard that he who thus saves his life in time, should lose it in eternity? Flesh and blood will complain, and Christ loses many disciples, who forsake and walk no more with him, because of these hard sayings. What then is to be done? Must we bring down the laws of God to comply with flesh and blood; or must we not rather, through divine grace, exalt flesh and blood, to comply with the laws of God? The religion, like the character, of our Lord, is one of suffering and self-denial; he who has determined against these, may as well wipe off from his forehead, at once, the *cross* with which it was signed at his baptism.

You will say, the doctrine is unreasonable, and of tyranny there can be no end, if it be unlawful to resist it.

Perhaps, if we only lay aside for a moment our passions and prejudices, we shall see how much better God has provided for our happiness than we ourselves should do, in commanding obedience to our governors, though at any time they happen not to be so good as we could wish them to be.

For, first, if you allow to subjects a power of taking arms, and deposing their princes, *who is to be judge* when there is a sufficient reason for exerting such power? Men will never judge fairly and impartially in their own cause. The best writers on this side of the question allow, that nothing less can justify it, than "a total subversion of the constitution." But if they wait till this is effected, it will be too late: and if they are to begin before, how often will they be deluded by artful and designing men, who will exclaim, that a total subversion of the constitution is intended, whenever the demands of themselves and their friends are not satisfied, or their plans adopted and pursued! While the administration of government is in the hands of men, errors must be committed; factious spirits will never be wanting to aggravate and represent them as much worse than they really are, to alarm the people with jealousies and surmises, and blow the trumpet of sedition and rebellion through the land. How soon the people are seduced, and how little dependence can be placed on their voice, may be learned from the behaviour of the Jews to the Son of God, whom the multitude on one day ushered into his capital with acclamations and hosannas,

and within a week, nothing was heard in the streets of that same capital, but "Away with him, Away with him; Crucify him, Crucify him!"

2. It should be considered, that although government may sometimes be bad, rebellion will generally be worse.—"The wrath of a king (says the scripture) is as the roaring of a lion;" he may destroy some: but "the madness of the people" is as the raging of a tempestuous sea, when it has burst its bounds; it overwhelms all. Compare the mischief said to be done, or designed, by our unfortunate Charles I. with the bloodshed and murder, the ravages and devastations of the *Great Rebellion*; from the horrors and miseries of which the nation was at length obliged to seek deliverance and protection by reestablishing the government that had been cast off. Whether the tumults and commotions that now distract a neighbouring country, will not end in like manner, time must discover.

A warning, however, and a very salutary one, is suggested to princes by the sight of the history of such events. Obedience to government is the scripture doctrine, and the ministers of religion are bound to preach it: by preaching it they may do much good, and can do no harm. But, though they preach it, and the people receive it, ever so heartily and affectionately, let not governors presume upon that circumstance so far as to abuse their power, and treat their subjects otherwise than they ought to be treated, that is, as a shepherd treats his flock, and a father his children. For, when driven to extremities, men will not always act according to their principles. *Oppression will make a wise man mad*; and that ruler is very far from a wise man, who ventures upon the experiment.

3. But respecting the principle of obedience, and the inconveniences to which it may sometimes subject us, we do not sufficiently rely upon the providence or the promises of God. The scriptures teach us, that as he setteth a righteous prince over a people that fear and serve him, so he often sendeth an unrighteous one to punish a wicked nation. In Job it is said, that "God maketh a wicked man to reign, for the sins of the people;" and in Hosea, that "he giveth a prince (meaning an evil one) in his anger; and taketh away a prince (that is, a good one) in his displeasure." When, therefore, we have a good prince, let us by our obe-



dience move God to continue him ; when we have one of another character, let us repent of those sins which provoked him to set such an one over us, and he will deliver us as he sees fit, either by taking him away, or changing his heart ; for “ the king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water ; he turneth it whithersoever he will.” In one word, let us either deserve good governors, or bear with such as we deserve.

Happy are we of this nation (did we but know our own happiness !) in possessing a constitution so framed by the wisdom of ages, as almost to preclude the necessity of nice questions and disputes upon this topic. In an empire extended like ours, government cannot be conducted by an assembly of the people at large, but they are free to choose the persons by whom they will be represented in the great council of the nation ; and if these do not give satisfaction, they are free, at certain constantly returning periods, to change them for others. In this council of representatives most laws originate ; without their consent none can be enacted ; nor can any be enacted, till they have been reconsidered and discussed in another assembly of the nobility, men of the first families and fortunes in the country, men liberally educated, men of reading and experience. To acts thus framed by one set of men, matured, revised, and, if need be, corrected by another, every kind of information being first called in by both, is requisite the consent of the prince. And even, after all, if when promulgated and carried into execution, a law has been found productive of unforeseen inconveniences and hardships to any particular class of subjects, upon petitions being duly preferred to the legislature, it has been taken afresh into consideration, altered, and amended. It seems impossible for imagination itself to conceive a form of government better calculated to answer every good purpose. The subject has all the liberty he can have, consistently with the very being of society ; while, to the ease and comfort of the prince, as well as the security of his people, his power is so defined and settled, that he can do no wrong, but “ by and with the consent and advice of both houses of parliament.” This constitution has long been the glory of Britain, and the envy of most nations around us ; nay, the people nearest in situation to us, with whom the solicitude of an Englishman for it was a

constant subject of ridicule, have undergone such an astonishing inversion of national character, that they are fainting and languishing for something like it, and have thrown their country into convulsions to obtain it. From an eminence, the firm and solid shore, we behold the storm raging below, with the satisfaction of reflecting, that we neither raised it, nor wish to take any advantage of it.

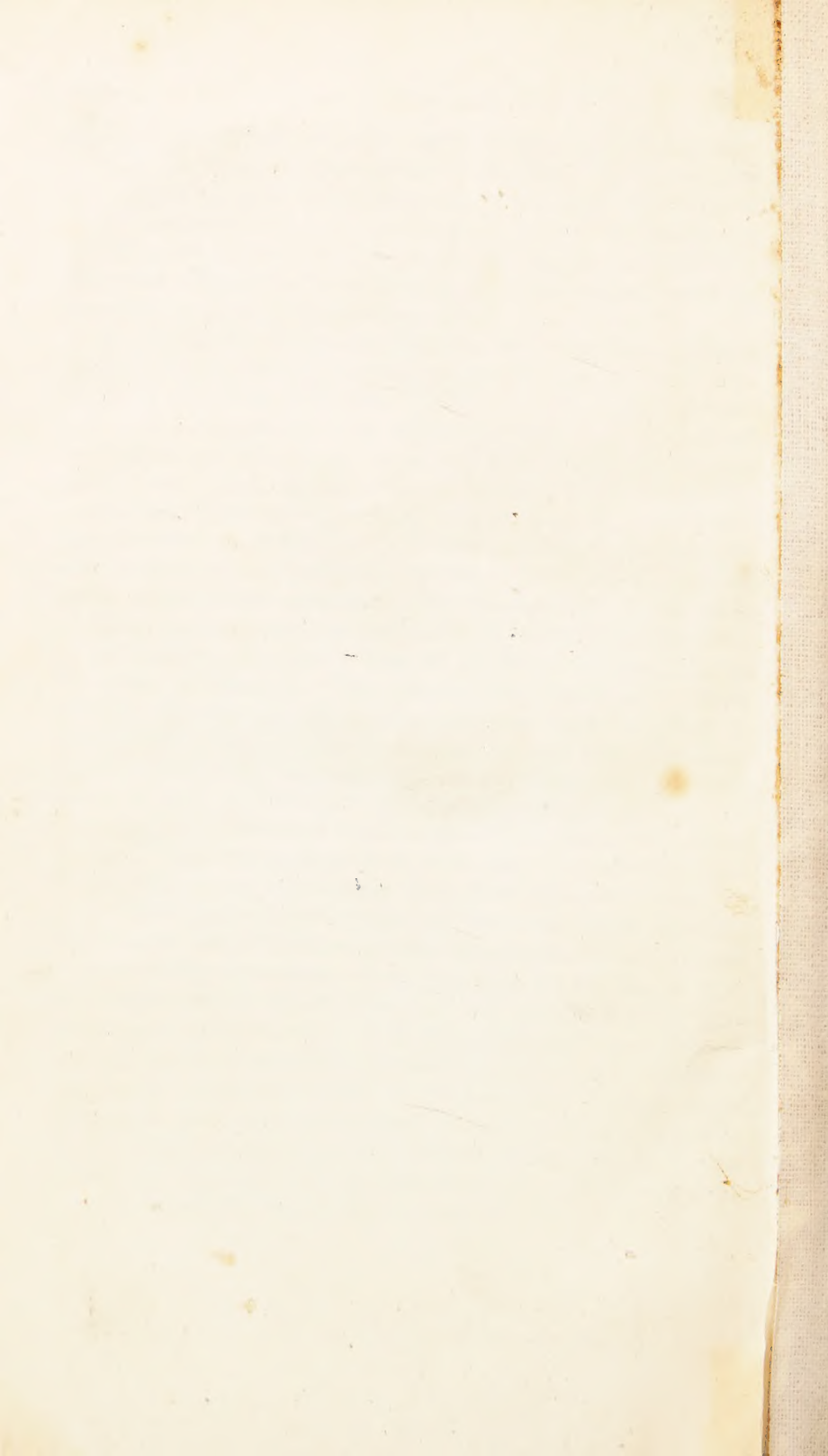
At the head of our constitution, we may say, without flattery, appears a king, whose first principle it is to fear God, and his first wish that all his subjects might do the same, and experience that support from above, under all their trials and afflictions, which he has experienced under all his own; and, in time, that deliverance from them.

A cloud suddenly appearing in the horizon, soon overspread the face of the sky, and obscured the source of light and motion in our political system. Directed whither to have recourse for assistance, the intercessory prayer of a whole people ascended to the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, the sure refuge of all who call upon him in the time of trouble. The prayer was heard—the cloud passed; the day returned; the king was seen rejoicing in thy strength, O Lord; and a nation, revived from the dead, again walking in the light of thy countenance; joy and gladness were heard in our land, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. Thousands and ten thousands hailed the restoration of their sovereign to them with tears of gratitude, confessing they never knew before how dear he was to them.

May this great blessing never fall from our remembrance, and may no future offences and transgressions of ours prevent it from being permanent: may gladness in our hearts produce righteousness in our lives, and mercy melt those whom judgment could not soften: may the goodness of God answer the end which it is always intended to answer, that of leading us to repentance, and, by repentance, through faith unfeigned, and love unbounded, to those blissful regions, where shall be no more death, neither crying, nor pain, but earthly sorrow shall end in heavenly joy, and a temporal cross be succeeded by an eternal crown.

THE END.







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